

THE
WORKS
OF
JAMES THOMSON.

VOLUME THE FOURTH.

CONTAINING,
EDWARD and ELEONORA,
TANCRED and SIGISMUNDA,
AND
CORIOLANUS.

J:G*H

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JAMES THOMSON

THE

ALFONSO



1850

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T A A O R D Y

TO HER
ROYAL HIGHNESS,
THE
PRINCESS of WALES.

MADAM,

IF I take the liberty, once more, to crave the protection of your ROYAL HIGHNESS, for another Tragedy of my writing, it is because I am led, almost unavoidably, to it, by my subject. In the character of ELEONORA, I have endeavoured to represent, however faintly, a PRINCESS distinguished for all the virtues that render greatness amiable. I have aimed, particularly, to do justice to her

vi D E D I C A T I O N.

inviolable affection and generous tenderness for a PRINCE, who was the darling of a great and free people.

Their descendants, even now, will own, with pleasure, how properly this address is made to your ROYAL HIGHNESS. I am, with the profoundest respect,

M A D A M,

Your ROYAL HIGHNESS'S

Most humble and

Most devoted servant,

JAMES THOMSON.

PROLOGUE.

By a FRIEND.

*IN former times, when fierce religious rage,
And priestly sway deform'd each suffering age,
All manly wit, all useful learning lay
In darkness lost, nor hop'd returning day.
Religion then was stain'd by cruel deeds :
And free-born Reason stoop'd to craft and creeds.
But happier we !— And tho' to-night we show
What fatal ills from blind devotion flow,
'Tis not that we such rage renew'd can fear,
Or dread the hand of persecution here—
Our scene would wide humanity impart ;
Would breathe extensive candor thro' the heart ;
Show true religion even to error kind,
And claim the perfect freedom of the mind.*

*If, too, the poet paints a noble strife
'Twixt the fond husband and the generous wife ;
If all the father in his voice complains,
And all the mother in her tender strains ;
If these best passions prompt the pleasing woe,
Indulge it freely— Nature bids it flow :
Where parent Nature leads, you cannot stray ;
And what she wills, 'tis virtue to obey.*

*Fond of Britannia's fame, and just to You,
He bids old English honour live anew,
And calls your great first Edward up to view.
But if his line too weak, his stroke too faint,
The graceful figure, in full light, to paint ;
In candid part his honest meaning take,
And spare the poet for the hero's sake.*

}

The PERSONS.

EDWARD, Prince of <i>England</i> ,	Mr Delane.
Earl of GLOSTER,	Mr Rosco.
THEALD, Archdeacon of <i>Liege</i> ,	Mr Roberts.
SELIM, Sultan of <i>Jaffa</i> ,	Mr Ryan.
ELEONORA, Princess of <i>England</i> ,	Mrs Horton.
DARAXA, an Arabian Princess,	Mrs Hallam.

Assassin, Officers, &c.

SCENE, *Edward's tent in the camp before Jaffa, a city on the coast of Palestine.*

E D W A R D
A N D
E L E O N O R A.
A
T R A G E D Y.

A C T I. S C E N E I.

Prince EDWARD, *THEALD Archdeacon of Liege,*
Earl of GLOSTER.

EDWARD.

I WILL no longer doubt. 'Tis plain, my friends,
That with our little band of English troops,
By all allies, all western powers deserted,
All but the noble knights that guard this land,
The flower of Europe and of Christian valour,
Nought can be done, nought worthy of our cause,
Worthy of England's heir, and of the name
Of *Lion-hearted* RICHARD ; whose renown,
After almost a century elaps'd,
Shakes through its wide extent this Eastern world.

VOL. IV.

B

What else could bend the Saracen to peace,
 Who might, with better policy, refuse
 To grant it us? yes, to the prince of Jassa
 I will accord the peace he has demanded :
 And tho' my troops, impatient, wait the signal
 To storm yon walls, yet will I not expose,
 In vain attempts, valour that should be saved
 For better days, and for the public welfare.
 Rash fruitless war, from wanton glory wag'd,
 Is only splendid murder—What says Theald?
 Approves my reverend father of my purpose?

Thea. Edward, illustrious heir of England's crown,
 I must indeed be blinded with the zeal
 Of this our holy cause, to think your arms,
 Thus all-forlaken, thus betray'd, sufficient
 To reach the grandeur of your first design,
 And, from the yoke of Infidels, to free
 The sacred city, object of our vows ;
 Yet this, methinks, this Jassa might be seiz'd :
 That still were something, an auspicious omen
 Of future conquest—But, unskill'd in war,
 To you, my Lord, and Gloster's wise experience
 I this submit.

Edw. Speak, Gloster, your advice,
 Before I fix my latest resolution.

Glost. You know, my Lord, I never was a friend
 To this crusade. My unchang'd advice
 Is strenuous still for peace. Nor this, I urge,
 From our deserted arms, and cause betray'd,
 But from the state of our unhappy country.
 Behold her. Edward, with a filial eye,
 And say, is this a time for these adventures?
 Behold her then with deep commotion shook,
 Beneath a false delusive face of quiet :
 Behold her bleeding yet from civil war,
 Exhausted, sunk ; drain'd by ten thousand arts

Of lawless imposition, priestly fraud,
Italian leeches, and insatiate Rome ;
That never raged before with such gross insult,
With such abandon'd avarice. Besides,
Who knows what evil counsellors, again,
Are gather'd round the throne ! In times like these
Disturb'd, and lowring with unsettled freedom,
One step to lawless power, one bold attempt
Renew'd, the least infringement of our charters,
Would in the giddy nation raise a tempest.
Return my prince. You have already sav'd
Your father from his foes, from haughty Leicester :
Now save him from his ministers, from those
Who hold him captive in the worst of chains—

Edw. You, Gloster, sav'd us both.

Glost. I did my duty ;

Even while I join'd with Leicester, did my duty—
I hope I did—He, who contends for freedom,
Can ne'er be justly deem'd his sovereign's foe :
No, 'tis the wretch that tempts him to subvert it,
The soothing slave, the traitor in the bosom,
Who best deserves that name ; he is a worm
That eats out all the happiness of kingdoms.

Edward, return ; lose not a day, an hour,
Before this city. Tho' your cause be holy,
Believe me, 'tis a much more pious office,
To save your father's old and broken years,
His mild and easy temper, from the snares
Of low corrupt insinuating traitors :
A nobler office far ! on the firm base
Of well-proportion'd liberty, to build
The common quiet, happiness and glory,
Of king and people, England's rising grandeur.
To you, my prince, this task, of right belongs.
Has not the royal heir a juster claim
To share his father's inmost heart and counsels,

Than aliens to his int'rest, those who make
A property, a market of his honour ?

One reason more allow me to suggest
For peace, immediate peace—should blind misfortune,
In this far distant hostile land, oppress us ;
A chance to which our weakness stands expos'd :
What, Edward, of thy princess would become,
Thy Eleonora ; she, whose tender love
Thro' stormy seas, and in fierce camps attends thee ?
What of thy blooming offspring ? charg'd with these,
To give our courage scope were cruel rashness.

Edw. Enough, my Lord : I stand resolv'd on peace ;
And will to England strait—But where, alas,
Where shall we cover our inglorious heads ;
When gay with hope the people round us press,
To hear by what exploits we have sustain'd
The fame of Richard, and of English valour ?
Shall I, my generous country, I be rank'd
With those weak princes, who consume thy wealth,
And sink thy name in idle expeditions ?
Perfidious France ! be this the ruling point
Of my whole life, and passion of my soul,
To humble thee, proud nation !—Meantime, Gloster,
See that the captive princess be restor'd,
Daraxa, to the Sultan of this city,
Whose bride she is—We wage not war with women.

S C E N E II.

EDWARD, THEALD, GLOSTER, *An Officer belonging to the Prince.*

Off. One from the prince of Jassa, Sir, demands
Your secret ear on some important message.

Edw. Conduct him to my tent— [*Officer goes out.*]

He brings, I judge,
The Sultan's last instructions for this peace.
Here wait : I may your faithful counsel want.

S C E N E III.

THEALD, GLOSTER.

Thea. Whatever woes, of late, have clouded England;

Yet must I, Gloster, call that nation happy,
On whose horizon smiles a dawning prince
Of Edward's worth and virtues.

Glost. True, my friend;
Edward has great, has amiable virtues,
That virtue chiefly which befits a prince:
He loves the people he must one day rule;
With fondness loves them, with a noble pride;
Esteems their good, esteems their glory his.
One instance it becomes me to recount,
That shows the genuine greatness of his soul.
Tho' I have met him in the bloody field,
He fighting for his father, I for freedom;
Yet bears his bosom no remaining grudge
Of those distracted times: to me his heart
Is greatly reconcil'd—Virtue! beyond
The little unforgiving soul of tyrants!

Now will I tell thee, Theald, whence I stoop
To wear the gaudy chains of court-attendance,
At these grey years; that should in calm retirement
Pass the soft evening of a bustling life,
And plume my parting soul for better worlds.
Amidst his many virtues, youthful Edward
Is lofty, warm, and absolute of temper!
I therefore seek to moderate his heat,
To guide his fiery virtues, that, misled
By dazzling power, and flattering sycophants,
Might finish what his father's weaker measures
Have try'd in vain. And hence I here attend him,
In expeditions which I ne'er approv'd,

In holy wars—your pardon, reverend father—
 I must declare I think such wars the fruit
 Of idle courage or mistaken zeal,
 Sometimes of rapine and religious rage,
 To every mischief prompt.

Thea. You wrong, my Lord,
 You wrong them much. To set this matter only
 Upon a civil footing: say, what right
 Had robbers rushing from Arabian deserts,
 Fierce as the sun that kindled up their rage,
 Thus, in a barbarous torrent to bear down
 All Asia, Afric, and profane their altars?
 And to repel brute force by force is just.
 Nay, does not even our duty, int'rest, glory,
 The common honour of the Christian name,
 Require us to repress their wild ambition,
 That labours westward still, and threatens Europe?

Gloß. Yes, when they burst their limits, let us check
 them;

And with a firmer hand than those loose Christians,
 The most corrupt and abject of mankind,
 Slaves, doubly slaves, who suffer'd these Arabians,
 In virtue their superiors as in valour,
 Without resistance to o'er-run the world.

By rage and zeal, 'tis true, their empire rose:
 But now some settled ages of possession
 Create a right, than which, I fear, few nations
 Can shew a better. Sure I am 'tis madness,
 Inhuman madness, thus, from half the world,
 To drain its blood and treasure, to neglect
 Each art of peace, each care of government;
 And all for what? By spreading desolation,
 Rapine and slaughter o'er the other half,
 To gain a conquest we can never hold.

I venerate this land. Those sacred hills,
 Those vales, those cities, trod by saints and prophets,

By GOD himself, the scenes of heavenly wonders,
Inspire me with a certain awful joy.

But the same GOD, my friend, pervades, sustains,
Surrounds and fills this universal frame;

And every land where spreads his vital presence,
His all-enlivening breath, to me is holy.

Excuse me, Theald, if I go too far :
I meant alone to say, I think these wars
A kind of persecution. And when that,
That most absurd and cruel of all vices,
Is once begun, where shall it find an end ?
Each in his turn, or has or claims a right
To wield its dagger, to return its furies ;
And, first or last, they fall upon ourselves.

Edw. [behind the scenes.] Inhuman villain ! is thy
message murder ?

Thea. Ha ! heard you not the Prince exclaiming
murder ?

Gloſt. Should this Barbarian messenger—

[Moving towards the noise.]

'Tis so !

S C E N E IV.

THEALD, GLOSTER ; to them Prince EDWARD
wounded in the arm, and dragging in the Assassin.

Edw. Detested wretch ! And does the Prince of Jassa
Send base assassins to transact his treaties ?

There—take thy answer, ruffian !

[Stabs him with the dagger he had wrested from him.]
Blow too hasty !

I should have sav'd thee for a fitter death.

Aff. I would have triumph'd, Christian, in thy rage.
For know, thou vile destroyer of the faithful !

That tho' my erring dagger miss'd thy heart,

Yet has it fir'd thy veins with mortal poison,

Whose very touch is death—ALLAH be prais'd!

O glorious fate! prophet, receive my soul! [*Dies.*

Edw. [*after a short pause.*] Why gaze you with amazement on each other?

Are we not men, to whom the various chances
Of life are known?

Gloſt. Ha! poison! did he say?

Then is at once my prince and country lost!

O fatal wound to England!

Thea. Quick, my Lord,

Retire and have it dress'd, without delay;

Ere the fell poison can diffuse its rage,

And deeply taint your blood.

Edw. The Princess comes!

O save me from her tenderness!

S C E N E V.

EDWARD, THEALD, GLOSTER; *to them the Princess*
ELEONORA.

Eleon. My Edward!

Support me!—Oh!

Edw. She faints—my Eleonora!

Look up, and bless me with thy gentle eyes!—

The colour comes, her cheeks resume their beauty,

And all her charms revive—Hence, spurn that carcass:

A sight too shocking for my Eleonora.

Eleon. And lives my Edward, lives my dearest Lord,
From this assassin sav'd?—Alas! you bleed!

Edw. 'Tis nought, my lovely Princess!—A slight
wound—

Eleon. But, ah! methought, I entering heard of
poison,

Tainting the blood—What! was the dagger poison'd?—

Ha! silent all? will none relieve my fears?—

Gloſt. Madam, restrain your tenderness a moment—

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The Prince delays too long—Let him retire.
 Meanwhile the troubled camp shall be my care;
 Lest the base foe should make a sudden sally,
 While yet our troops are stun'd with this disaster.

Edw. I thank thee, noble Gloster. Nor, alone
 Support my troops; go, rouse them to revenge;
 Tell them their injur'd Prince will try their love,
 Their valour soon—And you, my friend, good Theald,
 Attend the Princess—Chear thee, Eleonora!

I cannot, will not, leave thee long, to vex
 Thy tender soul with aggravated fears.

Thea. Behold Daraxa, the false Sultan's bride.

S C E N E VI.

ELEONORA, THEALD, DARAXA.

Dar. Princess of England, let me share thy grief.
 Whence flow these tears? and what this wild alarm,
 This noise of murder and assassination?

Eleon. Alas! the Prince is wounded by a ruffian;
 And with a poison'd dagger, as I fear.
 Yet none will ease me of this racking thought—
 Nay, tell me, Theald, since to know the worst
 Is oft a kind of miserable comfort;
 What has befallen the Prince? For this slight wound
 Could never thus o'ercast the brave with terror.

Thea. I dare not, Princess, dally with your fate.
 An impious villain, from the Sultan Selim,
 Pretended to the Prince a secret message,
 About the peace in treaty. Dreading nought,
 He left us here, and to his tent retir'd,
 There to receive this execrable envoy.
 Strait with the Prince alone, the fierce assassin
 Attempted on his life; but, in his arm,
 He took, it seems, the blow, and from the villain
 Wresting the dagger, plung'd it to his heart.

EDWARD AND

This last we saw, and heard th' inhuman bigot,
Who deem'd himself a martyr in their cause,
Boast, as he died, the Prince's wound was poison'd—

Eleon. Then all I fear'd is true! when am I wretched,
Beyond even hope!

Dar. A villain from the Sultan!—

Eleon. Ah the distracting thought! And is my life!
My love! my Edward! on the brink of fate!
Of fate that may this moment snatch him from me!

Dar. What! Selim send assassins? and beneath
A name so sacred? Selim, whose renown
Is incense breathing o'er the sweeten'd east;
For each humane, each generous virtue fam'd;
Selim! the rock of faith! and sun of honour!

Eleon. O complicated woe! The Christian cause
Has now no more a patron, and restorer;
England no more a Prince, in whom she plac'd
Her glory, her delight, her only hope;
These desolated troops no more a chief;
No more a husband, a protector, I,
A friend, a lover! and my helpless children
No more a father!

Dar. Pardon, gentle Princess,
If in this whirlwind of revolving passions,
That snatch my soul by turns, I have forgot
To pay the tribute which I owe thy sorrows—
But I myself, alas! am more unhappy!

Eleon. What woes can equal mine? who lose, thus
vilely,
The best! the bravest! loveliest of mankind!—

Dar. You only *lose* the man you love; but I,
O insupportable! must learn to *hate*,
To *scorn* what once was all my pride and transport!
Should Edward die by this accursed crime,
(Which Heaven forbid) he dies admir'd, belov'd,
In the full bloom of fame and spotless honour.

To you, the daughter of illustrious grief,
 Your tears remain, and sadly-sweet reflection;
 You with his image, with his virtues, still,
 Amidst the pensive gloom, may converse hold;
 While I—Ah! nothing meets my blasted sight;
 But a black view of infamy and horror!
 What is the loss of life to loss of virtue! ———
 And yet how can this heavenly spark be lost?
 No! virtue burns with an immortal flame.
 He is belov'd—some villain has abus'd him.

Thea. I honour, Madam, this your virtuous grief:
 But that the Sultan did employ th' assassin
 Is past all doubt—Behold the false instructions,
 By which he gain'd admittance.

[Giving her the letter the Prince had dropt.]

Dar. Ha!—'Tis so!

His hand! his seal!—From my detesting heart,
 I tear him thus for ever!—Perish, Seditious!
 Perish the feeble wretch, who more bewails him!
 That were to share his guilt!—Unhappy Princess!
 Now let me turn my soul to thy assistance——
 There is a cure, 'tis true——

Eleon. A cure, Daraxa!

O say, what cure?

Dar. No; it avails not, Madam;

None can be found to risque it.

Eleon. None to risque it?

Quick tell me what it is, my dear Daraxa.

Dar. To find some person, that, with friendly lip,
 May draw the poison forth; at least, its rage
 And mortal spirit. This will bring the wound
 Within the power of art: but certain death
 Attends the generous deed.

Eleon. *[kneeling.]* Then hear me, Heaven!
 Prime source of love! Ye saints and angels, hear me!
 I here devote me for the best of men,

Of princes and of husbands. On this cross
I seal the cordial vow : confirm it, Heaven!
And grant me courage in the hour of trial !

Thsa. O tenderness unequal'd !

Dar. Glorious Princess !

Eleon. Go. Theald, quickly find the Earl of Gloster,
And with him break this matter to the Prince.

As for the person, leave that task to me.

I with Daraxa will your call attend ;

O all ye powers of love, your influence lend.

The End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

GLOSTER, THEALD.

GLOSTER.

NO, Theald, no; he never will consent—

I know him well; he ne'er will purchase life
At such a rate: besides, in aid of love,
His generous pride would come, and deem it baseness.

Thea. Then is yon sun his last. The black'ning
wound

Begins already to confess the poison—

Meantime, my Lord, both friendship and our duty
Demand, at least, the trial. Well I know,
That poise his life with hers, he would as nothing
Esteem his own: but sure the life of thousands,
The mingled cause at once of heaven and earth,
Should o'er the best, the dearest life prevail.

Gloft. Alas! my friend, you reason, Edward loves.
How weak the head contending with the heart!
Yet be the trial made—Behold he comes.

SCENE II.

EDWARD, GLOSTER, THEALD.

Edw. [entering.] O thou bright sun! now hast'ning
to those climes,

That parent-isle, which I no more shall see;
And for whose welfare oft my youthful heart
Has vainly form'd so many a fond design;
O thither bear, resplendent orb of day,
To that dear spot of earth, my last farewell!

And oh! eternal Providence, whose course,
Amidst the various maze of life, is fix'd

By boundless wisdom and by boundless love,
I follow thee, with resignation, hope,
With confidence and joy; for thou art good,
And of thy rising goodness is no end!

Well met, my dearest friends!—It was too true.
The villain's threatening, and I nearly touch
That awful hour which every man must prove,
Yet every man still shifts at distance from him.
Come then, and let us fill the space between
These last important moments, whence we take
Our latest tincture for eternity.
With solemn converse and exalting friendship—
Nay—I heald—Gloster—wound me not with tears,
With tears that fall o'er venerable cheeks!
What could the Princess more?—Ah! there, indeed,
At every thought of her, I feel a weight,
A dreadful weight of tenderness, that shakes
My firmest resolution—Where is she?

Thea. She burns with fond impatience to attend
you.

Edw. And how, brave Gloster, did you leave the
camp?

Gloster. The camp, Sir, is secure: each soldier there
From indignation draws new force and spirit.
O 'tis a glorious, an affecting sight!
Those furrow'd cheeks that never knew before
The dew of tears, now in a copious shower
Are bath'd. Around your tent they, anxious, crowd,
Rank over rank: some pressing for a look;
Some sadly musing, with dejected eye;
Some, on their knees, preferring vows to Heaven;
And, with extended arm, some breathing vengeance.
“Base Saracens, they cry, perfidious cowards!
“But blood shall wash out blood—Ah! poor atone-
ment,
“Did the whole bleeding city fall a victim?”

Edw. Alas, that to repay their faithful love
I cannot live!—Yet moderate their zeal;
And let the sword of justice only strike
The faithless Selim, and his guilty council.
My new-departed spirit, just escap'd
From the low fev'rish passions of this life,
Would grieve to see the blood of innocence,
With that of guilt confounded, stain my tomb.

Thea. Permit me, Sir, the hope, that you yourself—

I speak it on just cause—may live to punish
This breach of all the sacred rights of men.

Edw. Why will you turn my thoughts, from earth
enlarg'd,

To soft enfeebling views of life again?

Thea. Not to a vain desire of life, my Lord,
I would recal them; but inspire each hope,
Advise each possibility to save it.
And there is yet a remedy.

Edw. Delusion!

Thea. The fair Arabian Princess mention'd one.

Edw. She one —Dāraxa!—something to compleat
Her lover's crime.

Thea. You could not wrong her thus,
Had you beheld the tempest of her soul,
Her grief, her rage, confusion, when she heard
Of Selim's baseness; had you seen that honour,
That glorious fire which darted from her eyes;
'Till in a flood of virtuous sorrow sunk
She almost equal'd Eleonora's tears.

Edw. What was it the propos'd?

Thea. It was, my Lord,
To find some person, who, with friendly lip,
Might draw the deadly spirit—

Edw. I have heard

Of such a cure ; but is it not, good Theald,
An action fatal to the kind performer ?

Thea. Yes, surely fatal.

Edw. Name it then no more.

I should despise the paltry life it purchas'd.
Besides, what mortal can dispose so rashly
Of his own life ? talk not of low condition,
And of my public rank : when life or death
Becomes the question, all distinctions vanish ;
Then the first monarch and the lowest slave
On the same level stand, in this the sons
Of equal nature all.

Thea. Allow me, Sir.

If 'tis a certain, an establish'd duty,
Than duty more, the height of human virtue,
To sacrifice a transitory life
For that kind source from whence it is deriv'd,
And all its guarded joys, our dearest country ;
It may be justly sacrific'd for those
On whom depends the welfare of the public.
And there is one, my Lord, who stands devoted,
By solemn and irrevocable vows,
To die for you.

Edw. To die for me !—Kind nature !

Thanks to thy forming hand, I can myself,
Chearful, sustain to pay this debt I owe thee,
Without the borrow'd sufferings of another.
No, Theald, urge this argument no more.
I love not life to that degree, to purchase,
By the sure death of some brave guiltless friend,
A few uncertain days, that often rise,
Like this, serene and gay, when, with swift wing,
A moment wraps them in disastrous fate.

Glost. Did we consult to save your single life,
Was that the present question, thy refusal
Were just, were generous. But, my Lord, this person,

Who stands for you devoted, should, in that
 Be deem'd devoted for the Christian cause,
 The common cause of Europe and thy country;
 Dies for the brave companions of thy fortune,
 Who weeping now around thy tent conjure thee
 To live for them, and England's promis'd glory.
 O save our country, Edward! save a nation,
 The chosen land, the last retreat of freedom,
 Amidst a world enslav'd!—Cast back thy view,
 And trace from farthest times her old renown.
 Think of the blood, that, to maintain her rights,
 And guard her sheltering laws, has flow'd in battle,
 Or on the patriot's scaffold. Think what cares,
 What vigilance, what toils, what bright contention,
 In councils, camps, and well-disputed senates,
 It cost our generous ancestors, to raise
 A matchless plan of freedom: whence we shine,
 Even in the jealous eye of hostile nations,
 The happiest of mankind.—Then see all this,
 This virtue, wisdom, toil and blood of ages,
 Behold it ready to be lost for ever.

In this important, this decisive hour,
 On thee, and thee alone, our weeping country
 Turns her distressful eye; to thee she calls,
 And with a helpless parent's piercing voice.
 Wilt thou not live for her? for her subdue
 A graceful pride, I own, but still a pride,
 That more becomes thy courage and thy youth,
 Than birth and public station? Nay, for her,
 Say, wouldst thou not resign the dearest passions?

Edw. O there is nothing, which for thee, my
 country;

I, in my proper person, could not suffer!
 But thus to sculk behind another's life,
 'Tis what I have not courage to support,
 It makes a kind of coward of me, Gloster.

But let me see this friend, whose generous virtue
Exceeds what even my favourable thoughts
Had imagin'd in the selfish race of man.
The purpose claims the merit of the deed ;
And ere I die I must requite his friendship.
Conduct him hither, Theald.

S C E N E III.

EDWARD, GLOSTER.

Edw. Ah, my Gloster,
You have not touch'd on something that here pleads
For longer life, beyond the force of reason,
Perhaps too powerful pleads—my Eleonora!
To thee, my friend, I will not be a sham'd
Even to avow my love in all its fondness,
For oh there shines in this my dearer self !
This partner of my soul ! such a mild light
Of careless charms, of unaffected beauty,
Such more than beauty, such endearing goodness,
That when I meet her eye, where cordial faith,
And every gentle virtue mix their lustre,
I feel a transport that partakes of anguish !
How shall I then behold her, on the point
To leave her, Gloster, in a distant land ?
For ever in a stormy world to leave her ?
There is no misery to be fear'd like that
Which from our greatest happiness proceeds !

S C E N E IV.

EDWARD, GLOSTER, THEALD *presenting the Princess* ELEONORA *as the person he went to bring ;*
DARAXA.

Edw. O Heaven !--what do I see ?--I am betray'd !--
[Turning away.]

Eleon. Edward!

Edw. O 'tis too much! O spare me nature!

Eleon. Not look upon me, Edward?

Edw. Eleonora!

How on this dreadful errand canst thou come?

Eleon. Behold me kneel——

Edw. Why kneel you, best of women!

You ne'er offended, ne'er in thought offended!

Thou art all truth, and love, and angel goodness!

Why do ye kneel? O rise, my Eleonora!

Eleon. Let me fulfil my vow.

Edw. O never! never!

Eleon. Let me preserve a life, in which is wrapt
The life of thousands dearer than my own!

Live thou, and let me die for thee, my Edward!

Edw. For me! thy words are daggers to my soul:

And wouldst thou have me then thus meanly save

A despicable life! a life expos'd

To that worst torment, to my own contempt!

A life still haunted by the cruel image

Of thy last pangs, thy agonizing throws,

The dire convulsions of these tender limbs;

And all for one—O infamy!—for one,

By love, by duty bound, each manly tie,

Even by a peasant's honour, to protect thee!

Yet this, tho' strong, invincible, is nought

To what my wounded tenderness could urge

Against thy dire request—But should fate demand

The life we love, then, then we must exert

The greatest act of human resignation;

We must submit. But wouldst thou have me, say,

Doom thee myself? with voluntary choice,

Nay, by a barbarous crime, untimely snatch

This worst of ills? would Eleonora make me

Of all mankind the most compleatly wretched?

Eleon. Plead not the voice of honour. Well I know,

There is no danger, pain, no form of death,
 Thou wouldst not meet with transport to protect me,
 But I, alas! an unimportant woman,
 Whose only boast and merit is to love thee;
 Ah, what am I, with nameless numbers weigh'd?
 With myriads yet unborn? all ranks, all ages,
 All arts, all virtues, all a state comprizes?
 These have a higher claim to thy protection.
 Live then for them.—O make a generous effort!
 What none but heroes can, bid the soft passions,
 The private stoop to those that grasp the public.
 Live to possess the pleasure of a god,
 To bless a people trusted to thy care,
 Live to fulfil thy long career of glory,
 But just begun. To die for thee be mine.
 I ne'er can find a brighter happier fate!
 And fate will come at last, inglorious fate!
 O grudge me not a portion of thy fame!
 As join'd in love, O raise me to thy glory!

Edw. In vain is all thy eloquence. The more

Thou wouldst persuade, I, with increasing horror,

Fly from thy purpose.

Eleon. Dost thou love me, Edward?

Edw. Oh!—If I love thee?—Witness Heavens
 and earth!

Angels of death that hover round me, witness!
 Witness these blinded eyes, these trembling arms,
 This heart that beats unutterable fondness,
 To what an agony I love thee——

Eleon. Then

Thou sure wilt save me from the worst of pains.

Edw. O that I could from all engross thy sufferings!
 Pain felt for thee were pleasure!

Eleon. Hear me, Edward.

I speak the strictest truth, no slight of passion ;
I speak my naked heart.— To die, I own,
Is a dread passage, terrible to Nature,
Chiefly to those who have, like me, been happy.—
But to survive thee—O 'tis greatly worse !
'Tis a continual death ! I cannot bear
The very thought—O leave me not behind thee !

Edw. Since nought can alter my determin'd breast,
Why dost thou pierce me with this killing image ?

Eleon. Ah ! selfish that thou art ! with thee the toil,
The tedious toil of life will soon be o'er ;
Thou soon wilt hide thee in the quiet grave :
While I, a lonely widow, with my orphans,
Am left defenceless to a troubled world,
A false, ingrateful, and injurious world !—
Oh, if thou lov'st me, Edward, I conjure thee,
By that celestial flame which blends our souls !
By all a father, all a mother feels !
By every holy tenderness I charge thee !
Live to protect the pledges of our love,
Our children !—

Edw. Oh !—

Eleon. Our young, our helpless—

Edw. Oh !—

Distraction !—Let me go !

Eleon. Nay, drag me with thee—
To the kind tomb—Thou can'st not leave our children
Expos'd, by being thine, beyond the lowest !
Surrounded with the perils of a throne !—

Edw. Cruel, no more embitter thus our last,
Our parting moments ! set no more the terrors
Of these best passions in array against me !
For by that power I swear, Father of life !
Whose universal love embraces all
That breathes this ample air ; whose perfect wisdom
Brings light from darkness, and from evil good ;

To whom I recommend thee, and my children :
 By Him I swear ! I never will submit
 To what thy horrid tenderness proposes !

Gloft. My Lord——

Edw. Oh !—these emotions are too much——
 I feel a heavy languor steal upon me :
 The working poison clogs the springs of life.
 Conduct me to my couch—Ah ! Eleonora !
 If we ne'er meet again—This one embrace——
 Yet sink not to despair—Heaven may preserve me
 By means superior to all human hope.

Eleon. I will not——cannot quit thee——

S C E N E V.

ELEONORA, DARAXA.

Dar. Princess, stay.

Think not the hand of death is yet upon him ;
 Resistless sleep will first oppress his senses,
 Before the last convulsive pangs come on ;
 For so the numbing poison oft begins
 To spread its dark malignity.—

Eleon. Ha !——Sleep !

Then is the time—Thanks to inspiring Heaven !
 But come, and ere the venom sink too deep,
 Swift let me seize the favouring hour of sleep.

The End of the Second Act.

A C T III. S C E N E I.

G L O S T E R.

O MIRACLE of love! O wondrous princess?
'Tis such as thou, who keep the gentle flame,
That animates society, alive,
Who make the dwellings of mankind delightful,
What is vain life? an idle flight of days,
A still delusive round of sickly joys,
A scene of little cares and trifling passions,
If not ennobled by such deeds of virtue?
And yet this matchless virtue, what avails it?
Th' afflicting angel has forsook the Prince,
And now pours out his terrors on the Princess.—
Forsook him, said I?—No; he must awake
To keener evils than the body knows,
Which minds alone, and generous minds can feel,
O virtue! virtue! as thy joys excel,
So are thy woes transcendent; the gross world
Knows not the bliss or misery of either.—
The Prince forsakes his couch—He seems renew'd
In health—Ah, short deceitful gleam of ease!

S C E N E II.

EDGAR, GLOSTER.

Edw. [advancing from his couch.] Hail to the fresher
earth and brighter day!
I feel me lighten'd of the mortal load
That lay upon my spirits. This kind sleep
Has shed a balmy quiet through my veins.

Whence this amazing change?—

But be my first chief care, Author of good!
To bend my soul in gratitude to thee!
Thou, when blind mortals wander through the deeps
Of comfortless despair, with timely hand,
Invisible, and by unthought-of ways,
Thus lead'st them forth into thy light again.

Gloſt. How fares my Lord, the Prince?

Edw. To health reſtor'd.

Only a kind of laſſitude remains,
A not unpleaſing weakneſs hangs upon me;
Like the ſoft trembling of the ſettled deep,
After a ſtorm.

Gloſt. Father of health be praiſ'd!

Edw. The moment that I ſunk upon my couch,
A ſick and troubled ſlumber fell upon me;
Chaos of gloomy unconnected thought!
That in black eddy whirl'd, made ſleep more dreadful
Than the worſt waking pang. While thus I toſs'd,
Ready to bid farewell to ſuffering clay,
Methought an angel came and touch'd my wound.
At this the parting gloom clear'd up apace;
My ſlumbers ſofter'd; and with health return'd
Serenity of mind, and order'd thought,
And fair ideas gladdening all the ſoul.
Aërial muſic too, by fancy heard,
Sooth'd my late pangs and harmoniz'd my breaſt.
Through ſhades of bliſs I walk'd, where heavenly
forms

Sung to their lutes my Eleonora's love——

But where is ſhe? the glory of her ſex!

O dearer, juſtly dearer, far than ever!

Quick, let me find her, pour into her boſom

My full, full ſoul, with tenderneſs o'ercharg'd,

With glad ſurpriſe, with gratitude and wonder.—

Ha! why this silence? this dejected look?

You cast a drooping eye upon the ground.

Where is the Princess?

Gloft. She, my Lord, repofes.

Edw. Repofes!—No!—It is not likely, Glofter,

That ſhe would yield her weeping eyes to ſleep,

While I lay there in agonies—away!

I am too feeble then to know the truth.

Say, is ſhe well?

Gloft. Now ſhow thy courage, Edward——

Edw. O all my fears! I ſhall ſtart out to madneſs!

What!——while I ſlept?

Gloft. Yes——

Edw. Miſery! diſtraction!

My peace, my honour is betray'd for ever!

O love! O ſhame! O murder'd Eleonora!

S C E N E I I I.

GLOSTER.

Unhappy Prince! go find thy Eleonora,

And in heart-eaſing grief exhale thy paſſion:

All other comfort, now, were to talk down

The winds and raging ſeas.—But yonder comes

Th' Arabian Princeſs. From her tears I learn

The moving ſcene within.

S C E N E IV.

GLOSTER, DARAXA, a Messenger from Selim, attending at some distance.

Dar. O, 'tis too much !
I can no more support it.

Glost. Generous mourner,
How is it with the princess Eleonora ?

Dar. Struck by the poison on her couch she lyes,
A rose soft-dropping in Sabeian vales,
Beneath the fiery dog-star's noxious rage.
O Christian chief, I never shall forget
The scene these melting eyes have just beheld,
With mingled tears of tenderness and wonder.

Glost. How was it, Madam ?

Dar. When this pride of women,
The best of wives which in his radiant course
The sun beholds, when first she, sickening, felt
Th' imperious summons of approaching fate,
All rob'd in spotless white she sought the altar ;
And, prostrate there, for her departing soul,
The prince her husband, and her orphan children,
Implor'd th' Eternal Mind.—As yet she held
Her swelling tears, and in her bosom kept
Her sighs repress'd: nor did the near approach
Of the pale king of terrors dim her beauty ;
No, rather, adding to her charms, it breath'd
A certain mournful sweetness through her features:
But as th' increasing bane more desperate grew,
Wild to her bed she rush'd ; and then, indeed,
The lovely fountains of her eyes were open'd,
Then flow'd her tears.—“ Connubial bed,” she cry'd,
“ Chaste witness of my tenderness for him,
“ To save whose life I unrepining die
“ In bloom of youth, farewell !—Thou shalt, perhaps,

"Receive a fairer, a more happy bride;
 "But never a more faithful, never one
 "Who loves her husband with a sonder passion."
 Here flow'd her tears afresh; with burning lip
 She press'd the humid couch, and wept again.
 At last, while weary sorrow paus'd, she rose,
 And fearing lest immediate death might seize her,
 Demanded to be led to see the Prince;
 But fear of chafing from his eyes, too soon,
 The salutary sleep that heal'd his pangs,
 Restrain'd her trembling footsteps. On her couch,
 Abandon'd to despair, she sunk anew,
 And for her children call'd. Her children came.
 A while, supported on her arm, she ey'd them,
 With tears pursuing tears a-down her cheek,
 With all the speechless misery of woe——
 I see her still—O GOD!—the powerful image
 Dissolves me into tears!

Glost. Madam, proceed;
 Such tears are virtue, and excel the joys
 Of wanton pride.

Dar. Then starting up, she went
 To snatch them to a mother's last embrace;
 When strait, reflecting that the piercing poison
 Might taint their tender years, she sudden shrunk
 With horror back—"O wretched Eleonora!
 "(She weeping cry'd) and must I then not tattle
 "The poor remaining comfort of the dying,
 "To see a husband, clasp my dearest children,
 "And mix my parting soul with theirs I love?"
 Her sad attendants, that till then had mourn'd
 In silent sorrow, all, at this, gave way
 To loud laments—She rais'd her languid eye,
 And casting on them round a gracious smile,
 To each by name she call'd, even to the lowest.
 To each extended mild her friendly hand,

Gave, and, by turns, received a last farewell.
Such is the dreadful scene from which I come.

Gloſt. How heighten'd now with Edward's mingled
woes !

Why are my lingering years reſerv'd for this ?

Dar. Come nearer, you, the meſſenger of Selim,
And bear him back this answer—His chief aim,
He ſays, in ſtooping to ſolicit peace,
Was from the chains of Infidels to ſave me.
What! was it then to reſcue me he ſent,
Beneath an all-rever'd and ſacred name,
Beneath the ſhelter of his hand and ſeal,
A murdering wretch, a ſacrilegious bigot,
To ſtab at once the gallant Prince of England,
And public faith ? nay, with a poiſon'd dagger
(Such his inhuman cowardice) to ſtab him ?
So well, 'tis true, he judg'd; the Chriſtian Prince
Had now been mingled with the harmleſs dead ;
If his bright Princeſs, glorious Eleonora,
Had not redeem'd his dearer life with her's.
You hear in what extremity ſhe lyes.
Go, tell the tyrant then—O heaven and earth !
O vanity of virtue ! that Daraxa
Should e'er to Selim ſend ſo fell a meſſage——
I will ſuppreſs its bitterneſs—Yet tell him,
This crime has placed eternal bars betwixt us.
See my laſt tear to love—Arabian wilds
Shall bury 'midſt their rocks the loſt Daraxa.
Away !

Gloſt. Behold, they bear this way the Princeſs,
Once more to taſte the ſweetneſs of the ſun,
Ere yet to mortal light ſhe bid farewell.

S C E N E V.

GLOSTER, DARAXA, THEALD, EDWARD, ELEONORA borne in by her Attendants on a couch.

Eleon. [*entering.*] A little on, a little further on,
Bear me, my friends, into the cooling air.
O chearful sun! O vital light of day!

Edw. That sun is witness of our matchless woes,
Is witness of our innocence—Alas!
What have we done to merit this disaster?

Eleon. O earth! O genial roofs! O the dear coast
Of Albion's isle! which I no more shall see!——

Edw. Nay, yield not to thy weakness, Eleonora!
Sustain thyself a little, nor desert me!
Th' all-ruling Goodness may relieve us still.

Eleon. Edward! I tremble! terror seizes on me!
Thro' the rent veil of yon surrounding sky,
I had a glimpse, I saw th' eternal world.
They call, they urge me hence—Yes, I obey.
But O forgive me, Heaven! if 'tis with pain,
With agonies, I tear my soul from his!

Edw. Heavens! what I suffer!—How thy plaintive
voice
Shoots anguish through my soul!

Eleon. Some power unseen—
Thy hand, my Edward—some dark power unseen
Is dragging me away—O yet a little
A little, spare me!—Ah! how shall I leave
My weeping friends, my husband and my children?

Edw. Unhappy friends! O greatly wretched husband!
And O poor careless orphans, who not feel
The depth of your misfortune!

Eleon. Lay me down;
Soft, lay me down—my powers are all dissolv'd—
A little forward bend me—Oh!

Edw. O Heaven !

How that soft frame is torn with cruel pangs !
Pangs robb'd from me !

Eleon. 'Tis thence they borrow ease——
My children ! O my children ! you no more
Have now a mother ; now, alas ! no more
Have you a mother, O my hapless children !

Edw. What do I hear ! What desolating words
Are these ? more bitter than a thousand deaths !
Death to my soul ! Call up thy failing spirit,
And leave me not to misery and ruin !

Eleon. Edward, I feel an interval of ease ;
And, ere I die, have something to impart
That will relieve my sufferings.

Edw. Speak, my soul !
Speak thy desire : I live but to fulfil it.

Eleon. Thou seest in what a hopeless state I ly,
I who this morning rose in pride of youth,
High-blooming, promis'd many happy years.
I die for thee, I self-devoted die.
Think not, from this, that I repent my vow :
Or that, with little vanity, I boast it :
No ; what I did, from unrepenting love
I chearful did, from love that knows no fear,
No pain, no weak remission of its ardor.
And what, alas ! what was it but the dictate
Of honour, and of duty ? nay, 'twas selfish,
To save me from unsufferable pain,
From dragging here a wretched life without thee.
Two fears yet stand betwixt my soul and peace.
One is for thee, lest thou disturb my grave
With tears of wild despair. Grieve not like those
Who have no hope. We yet shall meet again ;
We still are in a kind Creator's hand ;
Eternal goodness reigns. Besides, this parting,
This parting, Edward, must have come at last,

When years of friendship had, perhaps, exalted
Our love, if that can be, to keener anguish.
Think what thy station, what thy fame demanded ;
Nor yield thy virtue even to worthy passions.
My other care—my other care is idle——
From that thy equal tenderness with mine,
Thy love and generosity secure me.
Our children——

Edw. Yes, I penetrate thy fear,
But hear me, dying sweetness ! On this hand,
This cold pale hand I vow, our children never,
Shall never call another by the name
Sacred to thee ; my Eleonora's children
Shall never feel the hateful power thou fear'st.
As one in life, so death cannot divide us.
Nor high descent, nor beauty, nought that woman,
In her unbounded vanity of heart,
Can wish, shall ever tempt my faith from thee.
Shall ever, said I ? Piteous boast indeed !
O nothing *can* !——I should be gross of heart,
Tasteless and dull as earth, to think with patience,
Without abhorrence, of a second Hymen.
Where can I find such beauty ? where such grace,
The soul of beauty ? where such winning charms ?
Where such a soft divinity of goodness ?
Such faith ? such love ? such tenderness unequal'd ?
Such all that Heaven could give—to make me wretched !
Talk not of comfort——Into what a gulph
A lone abyss of misery I fall,
The moment that I lose thee—Oh ! I know not !
I dare not think !——But these unhappy orphans——
Ah the dire cause that makes it double duty——
Shall now be doubly mine ; to shelter them,
These pledges of our love, I will attempt
To brave the horrors of loath'd life without thee.

Eleon. Enough! it is enough! On this condition
Receive them from my hands.

Edw. Dear hands! dear gift!

Dear, precious, dying, miserable gift!

With transport once receiv'd, but now with anguish!

Eleon. All-softening time will heal my woes. The
dead

Soon leave the passions of the living free.

Edw. Detested life!—O take me, take me with
thee.

Eleon. No, Edward, live: or else I die in vain.

Edw. Raise, raise, my Eleonora, thy sweet eyes,
Once more behold thy children——

Eleon. Oh!—'Tis darkness——

A deadly weight——

Edw. Thou leav'st me then for ever!

Eleon. Where am I?—Ah—a tenant still to pain.

The quivering flame of life leaps up a little.

Meantime, my Edward, 'tis my last request,

That thou would'st leave me, while I yet enjoy

A parting gleam of thought—Leave me to Heaven!—

Gloster—farewel—be careful of the Prince——

Attend him hence—as I double now thy friendship!

Edw. Barbarian! off!—Ah, whither wouldst thou
drag me?

Gloster. My Lord, in pity to the Princess——

Edw. Oh!

Eleon. Farewel! farewel!—Receive my last adieu,
Edward, my dearest Lord, farewel for ever!

Edw. O word of horror!—Can I?—No, I cannot!
There, take me, lead me, hurl me to perdition!

S C E N E VI.

ELEONORA, DARAXA, THEALD, *Attendants.*

Eleon. 'Tis past, the bitterness of death is past—

Alas, Daraxa, I can ne'er requite

Thy generous cares for me. Thou art the cause

My Edward lives, my children have a father,

Thy heaven-inspir'd proposal—Tell him, Theald,

That in the troubled moments of our parting,

I had forgot to beg he would restore

Th' Arabian Princess to her friends and country—

Thy hand—This sure, howe'er in faith we differ,

Humanity, the soul of all religion,

May well permit.

Dar. By Virtue's sacred fire!

Our paradise, the garden of the blest,

Ne'er smil'd upon a purer soul than thine.

For me, think not of me; such are my woes,

That I disdain all care, detest relief:

My name is trod in dust; thine beams for ever,

The richest gem that crowns the worth of woman.

Eleon. The guilt of Selim cannot stain thy virtues:

It rather lends them lustre—Bear me back,

My dear attendants: and good Theald, come,

Come, aid my mounting soul to spring away,

From the lov'd fetters of this kindred clay.

The End of the Third Act.

EDWARD AND

ACT IV. SCENE I.

THEALD and a Gentleman belonging to him

THEALD.

TO me a dervise? Thro' the furious camp,
Yet raging at the perfidy of Selim,
How did he safely pass?

Gent. Sir, he had fallen

A victim to their vengeance; but he told them,
His life was of importance to the Prince,
That he who struck him stabb'd the heart of Edward.
This stay'd their rage; then, after a strict search,
They let him pass through ranks of glaring eyes.

I have besides to say, an English ship
And one from Italy are just arriv'd:
The first brings great dispatches to Prince Edward;
The other, holy father, these to you. *[Kneeling,*

Thea. Go, bid this dervise enter.

SCENE II.

THEALD; *he opens and looks on the dispatches.*

Awful Heaven!

Great ruler of the various heart of man!
Since thou hast rais'd me to conduct thy church,
Without the base cabal too often practis'd,
Beyond my wish, my thought, give me the lights,
The virtues which that sacred trust requires:
A loving, lov'd, untterrifying power,
Such as becomes a father; humble wisdom;
Plain, primitive sincerity; kind zeal,
For truth and virtue rather than opinions;
And above all, the charitable soul
Of healing peace and Christian moderation.——
The dervise comes.

S C E N E III.

THEALD, SELIM *disguis'd as a Dervise.*

Thea. With me what wouldst thou, dervise?

Sel. The Princess Eleonora lives she still?

Thea. She lives, and that is all.

Sel. Allah be prais'd!

Then lives the honour of the brightning name
Of Saracen and Mussulman.

Thea. How, dervise?

What can wipe out the horror of this deed?

Sel. The deed was execrable; but my hand

This instant shall prevent its dire effect.

I bring a certain remedy for poison;

Nor can it come too late; while wandering life

Yet, with faint impulse, stirs along the veins.

Thea. Ha! dervise, art thou sure of what thou
say'st?

Sel. Christian, I am; and therefore am I here.

Haste, lead me to the Princess: tho' she lay

Even in the last extremity, tho' call'd

By the fierce angel who compels the dead,

Yet bold experience gives me room to hope.

Oft have I seen its vital touch diffuse

New vigor thro' the poison'd streams of life,

When almost settled into dead stagnation;

Swift as a southern gale unbinds the flood.

Say, wilt thou trust me with the trial, Christian?

Thea. Thou know'st we have great reason for
distrust;

But fear in those who can no longer hope,

Were idle and absurd.

Sel. Bright heaven! what fear?

Is there a slave of such inhuman baseness

To add fresh outrage to a dying prince's?

For virtue dying? look into my eye :
Does one weak ray there shun the keenest gaze ?
Say, dost thou there behold so foul a bottom ?

Thea. No; seeming truth and generous candor shine
In what thou say'st. Come, follow me, good dervise.

S C E N E IV.

THEALD, SELIM, disguis'd, DARAXA.

Dar. At last, thro' various pangs the dying Prince
Sees the delivering moment, and demands
Thy presence, reverend Christian.

Thea. Dervise, come.
Forbid it, Heaven, this aid should be too late!

S C E N E V.

DARAXA.

Heaven! can it be! the very face of Selim!
'Tis he himself—I know him, 'tis the Sultan;
And, as he shot athwart me, from his eye
Flash'd the proud lightning of affronted virtue.
He must be innocent; his being here
Is radiant proof he must—O weak Daraxa!
What man of virtue more would deign to lodge
His image in thy breast! Ah! what avails
The light unfounded love, the treacherous friendship,
That, with inhuman cowardice, gives up
A worthy man to infamy and slander?
They talk'd of aid—what aid?

[*A cry heard within.*

Alas! 'tis past!

Death must be in that cry. O let me fly
To snatch one parting look; but see the Prince,
Rous'd by the sounds of sorrow, this way comes.
Unhappy Prince! I venerate his tears—
O gracious Allah! pity and support him.

[*Exit.*

S C E N E VI.

EDWARD.

That cry was death ; Alas ! she is no more !
 The matchless Eleonora is no more !—
 Where am I ? Heavens !—Ah ! what a hideous desert

Is now this world, this blasted world around me !

O sun, I hate thee, I abhor thy light,
 That shews not Eleonora ! Earth, thy joy,
 Thy sweetness all is fled, all, all that made
 Thy ways to me delightful, Eleonora !

O Eleonora ! perish'd Eleonora !

For ever lost !—That tent ! ah me ! that tent !

[Going into the tent starts back.]

I dare not enter there. There death displays
 His utmost terrors—Pale and lifeless, there,
 She lyes, whose looks were love, whose beauty smil'd
 The sweet effulgence of endearing virtue—
 And here I last beheld her—Ay, and how,
 And how beheld her !—The remorseless image
 Will haunt me to the grave—I see her suffering,
 With female softness, yet to pain superior,
 Fearful and bold at once, with the strong hand
 Of mighty love constraining feeble nature,
 To steal me from affliction—Let me fly
 This fatal ground—But whither shall I fly ?
 To England—O I cannot bear the thought
 Of e'er returning to that country more !
 That country, witness of our happy days,
 Where at each step remember'd bliss will sting
 My soul to anguish. I already hear
 Malice exclaim, nay, blushing valour sigh :
 Where is thy Princess ? where the wish of thousands ?
 The charm, the transport of the public eye ?

Base prince ! and art thou not ashamed to bring
 No trophy home but Eleonora's corse ?—
 The grave too is shut up, that last retreat
 Of wretched mortals—Yes, my word is pass'd,
 To Eleonora pass'd. Our orphan-children
 Bind me to life—O dear, O dangerous passions !
 The valiant, in himself, what can he suffer ?
 Or what does he regard his single woes ?
 But when, alas, he multiplies himself
 To dearer selves, to the lov'd tender fair,
 To those whose bliss, whose beings hang upon him,
 To helpless children ! then, O then ! he feels
 The point of misery festring in his heart,
 And weakly weeps his fortune like a coward.
 Such, such am I ! undone !—

S C E N E VII.

EDWARD, GLOSTER.

Edw. My Lord of Gloster,
 I thought my orders were to be alone.
Glost. Forgive my fond intrusion.—But I cannot
 Be so regardless of thy welfare, Edward,
 As to obey these orders.

Edw. But they shall,
 Shall be obeyed—I will enjoy my sorrows,
 All that is left me now.

Glost. The more thy grief,
 Just in its cause but frantic in degree,
 Seeks aggravating solitude, the more
 It suits my love and duty to attend thee,
 To try to soothe—

Edw. Away ! thou never shalt
 Not all that idle wisdom can suggest,
 All the vain talk of proud unfeeling reason,
 Shall rob me of one tear.

Glost. Of nature's tears

I would not rob thee : they invigorate virtue,
Sofien, at once, and fortify the heart ;
But when they rise to speak this desperate language,
They then grow tears of weakness ; yes—

Edw. I care not !
Weakness, whate'er they be, I will indulge them ;
Will, in despite of thee and all mankind,
Devote my joyless days for ever to them.

Gloft. Reason and virtue then are empty names !

Edw. Hence ! leave me to my fate—You have undone me ;

You have made shipwreck of my peace, among you,
My happiness and honour ; and I now
Roam the detested world, a careless wretch !

Gloft. Thy honour yet is safe, how long I know
not,

For full it drives upon the rocks of passion.
O all ye pitying powers that rule mankind !
Who so unworthy but may proudly deck him
With this fair-weather virtue, that exults,
Glad, o'er the summer main ? The tempest comes,
The rough winds rage aloud ; when from the helm
This virtue shrinks, and in a corner lyes
Lamenting.—Heavens ! if privileg'd from trial,
How cheap a thing were virtue !

Edw. Do—insult me—

Rail, spare me not—rail, Gloster, all the world—
But know, meantime, thou canst not make me feel
thee—

I have no more connection with mankind.

Gloft. Insult thee, Edward ? Do these tears insult
thee ?

These old man's tears !—Friendship, my Prince, can
weep,

As well as love—But while I weep thy fortune,
Let me not weep thy virtue sunk beneath it—

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Thou hast no more connection with mankind ?
 Put off thy craving senses, the deep wants
 And infinite dependencies of nature ;
 Put off that strongest passion of the soul,
 Soul of the soul, love to society ;
 Put off all gratitude for what is past,
 All generous hope of what is yet to come ;
 Put off each sense of honour and of duty :
 Then use this language.—Let me tell thee, Edward,
 Thou hast connections with mankind, and great ones,
 Thou know'st not of ; connections that might rouse
 The smallest spark of honour in thy breast,
 To wide-awaken'd life and fair ambition.

Edw. What dost thou mean ?

Gloſt. What mean ?—this day, in England,
 How many ask of Palestine their king,
 Edward their king ?—Read these—

Edw. [*opening the dispatches.*] O Gloſter !—Gloſter !—

Alas ! my royal father is no more !
 The gentleſt of mankind, the moſt abus'd !
 Of gracious nature, a fit ſoil for virtues,
 'Till there his creatures ſow'd their flattering lies,
 And made him—No, not all their curſed arts
 Could ever make him insolent or cruel.
 O my deluded father ! Little joy
 Hadſt thou in life, led from thy real good,
 And genuine glory, from thy people's love,
 That nobleſt aim of kings, by ſiniling traitors.
 Thus weak of heart, thus deſolate of ſoul,
 Ah, how unfit am I, with ſteady hand,
 To rule a troubled ſtate !—She, ſhe is gone,
 Softer of care, the dear reward of toil,
 The ſource of virtue ! She, who to a crown
 Had lent new ſplendor, who had grac'd a throne
 Like the ſweet ſeraph mercy tempering juſtice.

E L E O N O R A.

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O Eleonora! any life with thee,
The plainest could have charm'd: but pomp and
pleasure,

All that a loving people can bestow,
By thee unshared, will only serve to fret
The wounds of woe, and make me more unhappy!

Gloſt. Now is the time, now liſt thy ſoul to virtue!
Behold a criſis, ſent by Heaven, to ſave thee.

Whate'er, my Prince, can touch, or can command,
Can quicken or exalt the heart of man,
Now ſpeaks to thine—Thy children claim their father,
Nay, more than father, claim their double parent;
For ſuch thy promiſe was to Eleonora:

Thy ſubjects claim their king, thy troops their chief;
The Manes of thy anceſtors conſign

Their long-deſcended glory to thy hands;

And thy dejected country calls upon thee

To ſave her, raiſe her, to reſtore her honour,

To ſpread her ſure dominion o'er the deep,

And bid her yet ariſe the ſcourge of France,

Angels themſelves might envy thee the joy

That waits thy will, of doing general good:

Of ſpreading virtue, chearing lonely worth;

Of daſhing down the proud; of guarding arts,

The ſacred rights of induſtry and freedom;

Of making a whole generous people happy.

O Edward! Edward! the moſt piercing tranſports

Of the beſt love can never equal theſe!

And need I add—Thy Eleonora's death

Calls out for vengeance——

Edw. Ha!

Gloſt. If thou, indeed,

Doeſt honour thus her memory, then ſhew it,

Not by ſoft tears and womaniſh complaints,

But ſhew it like a man!

Edw. I will.

VOL. IV.

G

Gloft. Yon towers,

Edw. 'Tis true!

Gloft. Yon guilty towers!——

Edw. Insult us still!

Gloft. The murderer of thy Princess riots there!—

Edw. But shall not long!——Thou art my better
genius,

Thou brave old man! thou hast recall'd my virtue—

I was benumb'd with sorrow—what—or where——

I know not—never to have thought of this.

Bright virtue, welcome! vigor of the mind!

The flame from Heaven that lights up higher being!

Thrice welcome! with thy noble servant, anger,

And just revenge—Hence let us to the camp,

And there transfuse our soul into the troops:

This Sultan's blood will ease my fever'd breast.

Yes, I will take such vengeance on this city,

That all mankind shall turn their eyes to Jassa;

And as they see her turrets sunk in dust,

Shall learn to dread the terrors of the just.

The End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

SELIM.

O MY Daraxa ! thou hast charm'd my soul !
This reconciling interview has sooth'd
My troubled bosom into tender joy :
As when the spring first, on the soften'd top
Of Lebanon, unbinds her lovely tresses,
And shakes her blooming sweets from Carmel's brow—
It only now remains to see the Prince.—

SCENE II.

SELIM, THEALD.

Thea. I sought thee, worthy dervise.

Sel. Reverend Christian,

My toiling thoughts can find no fix'd repose,
Till the wrong'd Sultan's vindicated honour
Shine out as bright as yon unsullied sky.
Conduct me to the Prince—I claim that justice.—
It stings my conscious soul with sick impatience,
To think what Selim suffers. For a man,
Who loves the ways of truth and open virtue,
To ly beneath the burning imputation
Of baseness and of crimes—such horrid crimes !—
O 'tis a keen unsufferable torment !
Come, let me then discharge this other part
Of my commission.

Thea. That thou soon shalt do.

He strait will come this way, the King of England,
Such now he is. Meantime, 'tis fit to tell thee,
He must be managed gently ; for his passions
Are all abroad, in wild confusion hurl'd :
The winds, the floods, and lightning mix together.

E D W A R D A N D

I need not say how little, in this uproar,
Avails the broken thwarted light of reason.

Sel. Fear not—I trust in innocence and truth.

Thea. He cannot long delay; for as I enter'd,
I saw him parting from the hurried camp,
That lighten'd wide around him; burnish'd helms
And glittering spears, and ardent thronging soldiers,
Demanding all the signal, when to storm
These walls devoted to their vengeance.——

Sel. Ha!

Then let us quickly find him—But he comes.

S C E N E III.

SELIM, THEALD, EDWARD, GLOSTER.

Edw. Whence is it those barbarians, here again,
Those base, those murdering cowards, dare be seen?
What new accurs'd attempt is now on foot?
What new assassination?—Start not, dervise,
Tinge not thy caitiff cheek with red'ning honour.
What, thou!—Dost thou pretend to feel reproach?
Art thou not of a shameless race of people,
Harden'd in arts of cruelty and blood,
Perfidious all? Yes, have you not prophaned
The faith of nations? broke the holy tie
That binds the families of earth together,
That gives even foes to meet with generous trust,
And teaches war security? Your Prince,
Your Prince has done it! and you shall hereafter
Be hunted from your dens like savage beasts,
Be crush'd like serpents!

Thea. Sir, this dervise comes
To clear the Sultan Selim from that crime
Which you, with strong appearance, charge upon him.

Edw. Appearance, Theald! with unquestion'd proof
Doubtless the villain would be glad to change

The course by nature fix'd, enjoy his crimes
Without their evil——But he shall not 'scape me!

Sal. If, King of England, in this weighty matter,
On which depends the weal and life of thousands,
You love and seek the truth, let reason judge,
Cool, steady, quiet, and dispassion'd reason.
For never yet, since the proud selfish race
Of men began to jar, did passion give,
Nor ever can it give, a right decision.

Edw. Reason has judg'd, and passion shall chastise,
Shall make you howl, ye cowards of the East!
What can be clearer? This vile Prince of Jassa!
This infamy of princes! sends a ruffian,
By his own hand and seal commission'd, sends him,
To treat of peace; and as I read his letters,
The villain stabs me—This, if this wants light,
There is no certainty in human reason;
If this not shines with all-convincing truth,
Yon sun is dark—And yet these cowards come
With lying shifts, and low elusive arts——
O it inflames my anger into madness!
This added insult on our understanding,
This treacherous attempt to steal away
The only joy and treasure of my life,
Sweet sacred vengeance for my murder'd Princess.

Sal. The cursed wretch who did assail thy life,
O King of England, was indeed an envoy
Sent by the Prince of Jassa: this we own.
But then he was an execrable bigot,
Who for such horrid purposes had crept
Into the cheated Sultan's court and service,
As by the traitor's papers we have learn'd.
For know, there lives, upon the craggy cliffs
Of wild Phœnician mountains, a dire race,
A nation of assassins. Dreadful zeal,
Fierce and intolerant of all religion

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That differs from their own, is the black soul
Of that infernal state. Soon as their chief,
The old man (so they stile him) of the mountains,
Gives out his baleful will, however fell,
However wicked and abhorr'd it be,
Tho' cloath'd in danger, the most cruel death,
They, swift and silent, glide thro' every land,
As fly the gloomy ministers of vengeance,
Famine and plague; they ly for years conceal'd,
Make light of oaths, nay, sometimes change religion,
And never fail to execute his orders.
Of these the villain was, these ruffian saints,
The curse of earth, the terror of mankind:
And thy engagement, Prince, in this crusado,
That was the reason whence they sought thy life.

Edw. False, false as hell! the lie of guilty fear!
You all are bigots, robbers, ruffians all!
It is the very genius of your nation.
Vindictive rage, the thirst of blood consumes you:
You live by rapine, thence your empire rose;
And your religion is a mere pretence
To rob and murder in the name of Heaven.

Sel. Be patient, Prince, be more humane and just.
You have your virtues, have your vices too;
And we have ours. The liberal hand of Nature
Has not created us, nor any nation,
Beneath the blessed canopy of Heaven,
Of such malignant clay, but each may boast
Their native virtues, and their Maker's bounty.
You call us bigots.—O! canst thou with that
Reproach us, Christian Prince? What brought thee
hither?

What else but bigotry? What dost thou here?
What else but persecute?—The truth is great,
Greater than thou, and I will give it way;
Even thou thyself, in all thy rage, wilt hear it—

From their remotest source, these holy wars,
What have they breath'd but bigotry and rapine?
Did not the first crusaders, when their zeal
Should have shone out the purest, did they not,
Led by the frantic hermit who began
The murderous trade, thro' their own countries spread
The woes their vice could not reserve for ours?

Tho' this exceeds the purport of my message;
Yet must I, thus insulted in my country,
Insulted in religion, bid thee think,
O King of England, on the different conduct
Of Saracens and Christians, when beneath
Your pious Godfrey, in the first crusado,
Jerusalem was sack'd, and when beneath
Our generous Saladin it was retaken——
O hideous scene! my soul within me shrinks,
Abhorrent, from the view!—twelve thousand wretches,
Receiv'd to mercy, void of all defence,
Trusting to plighted faith, to purchas'd safety,
Behold these naked wretches, in cold blood,
Men, women, children, murder'd, basely murder'd!
The holy temple, which you came to rescue,
Regorges with the barbarous profanation.
The streets run dismal torrents. Drown'd in blood
The very soldier sickens at his carnage.
Couldst thou, O sun, behold the blasting sight,
And lift again thy sacred eye on mortals?
A ruthless race! Who can do this, can do it,
To please the general Father of mankind!
While nobler Saladin——

Edw. Away! be gone!

With thee, vile dervise, what have I to do?
I lose my hour of vengeance, I debase me,
To hold this talk with thee.

Sel. While truth and reason ,
Speak from my tongue, vile dervise as I am,

Yet am I greater than the highest monarch,
 Who, from blind fury, grows the slave of passion.
 Besides, I come to justify a Prince,
 Howe'er in other qualities below thee,
 In love of goodness, truth, humanity,
 And honour, Sir, thy equal;—yes, thy equal!—

Edw. What? how? compare me with a damn'd
 assassin?

A matchless villain!—Ha! presumptuous dervise!
 Thou gnaw'st thy quivering lip—A smother'd passion
 Shakes thro' thy frame.—What villainy is that
 Thou dar'st not utter?—Wert thou not a wretch,
 Protected by thy habit, this right hand
 Should crush thee into atoms—Hence! away!
 Go tell thy master that I hold him base,
 Beyond the power of words to speak his baseness!
 A coward! an assassinating coward!
 And when I once have dragg'd him from his city,
 Which I will straitway do—I then will make him,
 In all the gall and bitterness of guilt,
 Grinding the vengeful steel betwixt his teeth,
 Will make the traitor own it.

Sel. [*discovering himself.*] Never!

Edw. Ha!

Sel. Thou canst not, haughty monarch!—I am he!
 I am this Selim! this insulted Selim!
 Yet clear as day, and will confound thy passion.

Edw. Thou Selim!

Sel. I.

Edw. Was ever guilt so bold?

Sel. Did ever innocence descend to fear?

Edw. This bears some shew of honour. Wilt thou,
 then,

Decide it by the sword?

Sel. I will do more—

Edw. How more?

Sel. Decide it by superior reason.

Edw. No weak evasions!—

Sel. If I not convince thee,

If by thyself I am not of this crime

Acquitted, then I grant thee thy demand.

Nay more, yon yielded city shall be thine:

For know, hot Prince, I should disdain a throne

I could not fill with honour. Were I guilty,

I should not tremble at thy threat'ning voice;

No, 'tis myself I fear.

Edw. What shall I think?

Sel. Hear but one witness, and I ask no more,

To clear my name. The witness is a woman.

Her looks are truth; fair uncorrupted faith

Beams from her eyes. Thou ne'er canst doubt such

beauty;

For 'tis th' expression of a spotless soul.

Edw. Curse on thy mean luxurious eastern arts

Of cowardice! Thou would'st seduce my vengeance—

But I detest all beauty—Barbarous Sultan!

Ah! thou hast murder'd beauty! thy fell crime—

Haste, Gloster, haste—in sight of camp and city,

Prepare the lists—Now show thyself a prince,

Or die in shameful tortures like a slave.

Sel. I came not hither or to dread thy wrath,

Or court thy mercy.

Glost. Sir, you cannot justly

Refuse him his demand. The fervent soul

Of undissembled innocence, methinks,

Is felt in what he says. First hear this person;

And if she gives not full conviction, then,

Have then recourse to what should always be

The last appeal of reasonable beings,

Brute force.

Edw. Well then, conduct her hither, Sultan.—

[*Selim goes out.*]

Ah ! my disorder'd mind ! from thought to thought,
 Uncertain, tofs'd, the wreck of stormy passion !
 This rage a while supports me ; but I feel
 It will desert me soon, and I again
 Shall soon relapse to misery and weakness.
 O Eleonora ! little didst thou think,
 How deeply wretched thy dire gift of life
 Would make me !

S C E N E IV.

EDWARD, GLOSTER, THEALD ; *to them* SELIN
conducting ELEONORA, DARAXA.

Sel. Raise thy eyes, O King of England,
 To the bright witness of my blameless honour.

Edw. No ; beauty shall no more engage my eyes,
 It shall no more profane the shrine devoted
 To the sweet image of my Eleonora !
 Let her declare her knowledge in this matter.

Eleon. Will not my Edward bless me with a look?

Edw. What angel borrows Eleonora's voice !—
 O thou pale shade of her I weep for ever !
 Permit me thus to worship thee—Thou art !
 Amazing Heaven !—Thou art my Eleonora !
 My Eleonora's self ; my dear, my true,
 My living Eleonora !—What—to whom
 Owe I this miracle ? this better life ?—
 Oppressive joy !—owe I my Eleonora ?

Eleon. To him, that generous Prince, who put his life,
 His honour on the desperate risque to save me,
 When in the arms of death—Depriv'd of voice,
 Of motion, and of sense, benumb'd I lay,
 My frighted train around me thought me dead,
 And fill'd the tent with cries ; my heart alone
 Still feebly beat ; but soon the poison's force
 Had driven out life from that its last retreat ;

If in the moment of approaching fate,
He, like my guardian angel had not brought
An antidote of wond'rous power, by which
I am to light restor'd—to thee, my Edward!

Edw. Did he, did he preserve thee! He, whom thus
I have with such inhuman pride insulted!

O blind, O brutish, O injurious rage!

They, they are wise, who, when they feel thy madness,
Seal up their lips. And canst thou then forgive me,
Thou who hast o'er me gain'd that noblest triumph,
The triumph of humanity?—Thou canst.

'Tis easier for the generous to forgive
Than for offence to ask it.

Sel. Use not, Prince,

So harsh a word. More than forgive, I love
Thy noble heart, thy beautiful disorder.

O! I am too much man, I feel, myself,
Too much the charming force of human passions,
E'er to pretend, with supercilious brow,
With proud affected virtue, to disdain them.

Edw. How? generous Sultan, how shall I requite
thee?

Here—Take thy lov'd Daraxa, whom I meant
To have restor'd, when this misfortune happen'd;
But secret-working Heaven ordain'd her stay,
To save us all.

Sel. Wert thou the Lord of earth,
Thou could'st not give me more!—my dear Daraxa!

Edw. Hence to the camp, my Gloster—Bid the
soldiers

Forake the trenches—Let unbounded joy
Reign, fearless, o'er the mingled camp and city—
Go, tell my faithful soldiers, that their queen
My Eleonora lives! A prize beyond
The chance of war to give! She lives to soften
My too imperious temper, and to make them,

To make my people happy !—O my soul !
 What love e'er equal'd thine ? O dearest ! best
 Pride of thy sex ! inimitable goodness !
 Whenever woman henceforth shall be prais'd
 For conjugal affection, men will say,
 " There shine the virtues of an Eleonora !"
 Transporting bliss !—How bountiful is Heaven !
 Depressing often, but to raise us more.
 Let never those despair who follow virtue.
 Love—gratitude—divide me—Once more, Sultan,
 Forgive me, pardon my mistaken zeal,
 That left my country, cross'd the stormy seas,
 To war with thee, brave Prince, to war with honour.
 Now that my passions give me leave to think ;
 The hand of Heaven appears in what I suffer'd,
 My erring zeal has suffer'd by a zealot.

Sol. It does, O King. And, venerable Christian,
 I know thy moderation will excuse me.
 But since by ruling Wisdom (who unweigh'd,
 Unmeant, does nought) men are so various made,
 So various turn'd, that in opinions, they
 Must blindly think, or take a different way ;
 In spite of force, since judgment will be free ;
 Then let us in this righteous mean agree,
 Let holy rage, let persecution cease ;
 Let the head argue, but the heart be peace ;
 Let all mankind in love of what is right,
 In virtue and humanity unite.

The End of the Fifth Act.

EPILOGUE.

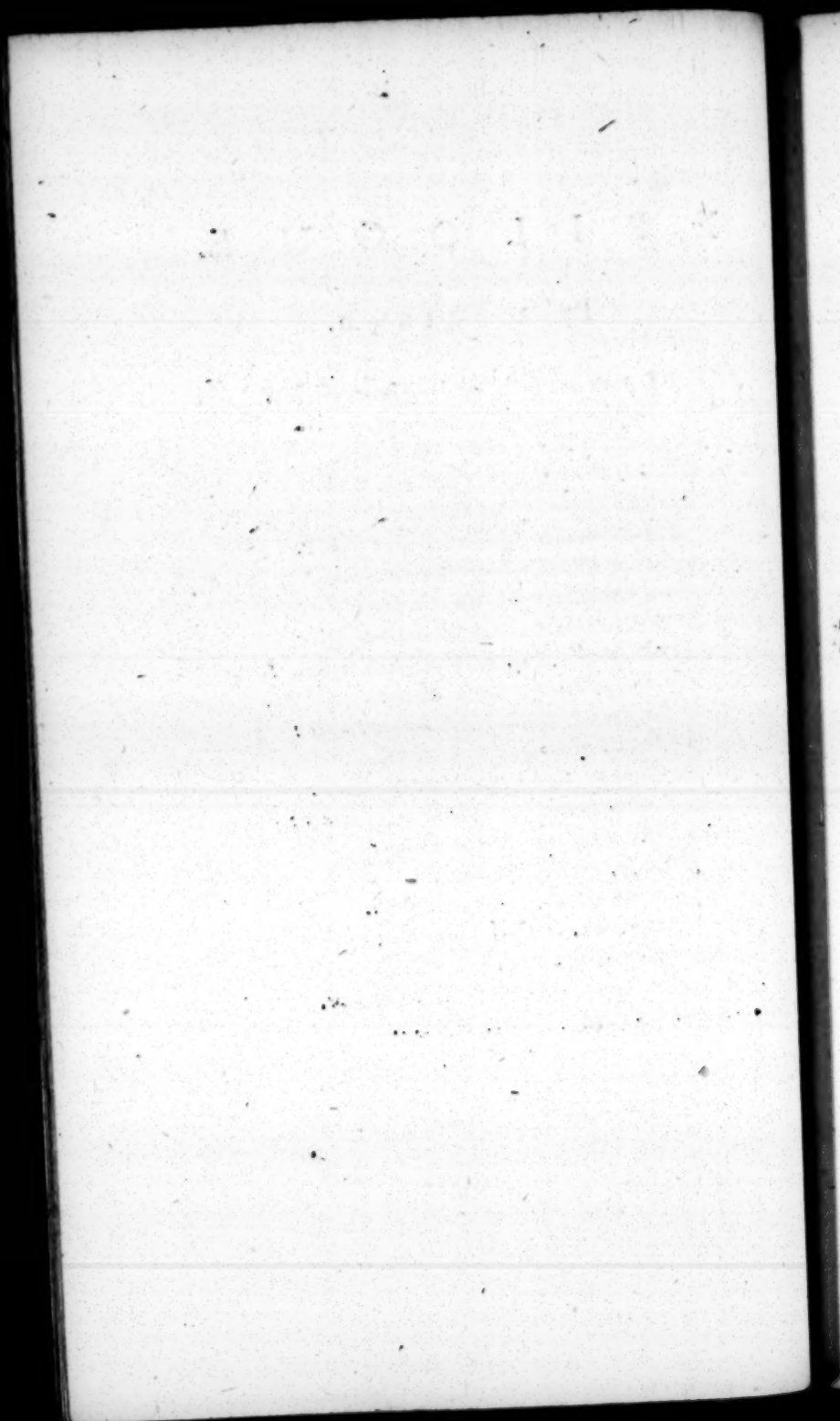
By a FRIEND.

THESE poets are such fools!—The man behind
Who wrote this play—a simple soul, I find,——
Believes with all his heart, there was a wife,
Who needs would die—to save a husband's life!
He in the printed chronicles has read it:

And true it is——Sir Richard Baker said it.

Why, what an ass these books do make a man?
Read nature—then believe it—you who can.
Look round this town—the question is not—whether
Spouse dies for spouse; but, who will live together?
Of old, they say, a husband was a lover:
But, thank our stars! those foolish days are over:
To such substantial prudence are we come,
We wed not heart to heart—but, plumb to plumb.
What sense? what beauty? are not now the things:
But can he settle—up to what she brings?

Yet in this easy, all-forgiving age,
Bear with such moral fooleries—on the stage.
Perhaps too, there may be some gentle soul,
Who rather likes to weep—than win a vole;
Who thinks that there are charms in generous love.
And would to Edward, Eleonora prove.



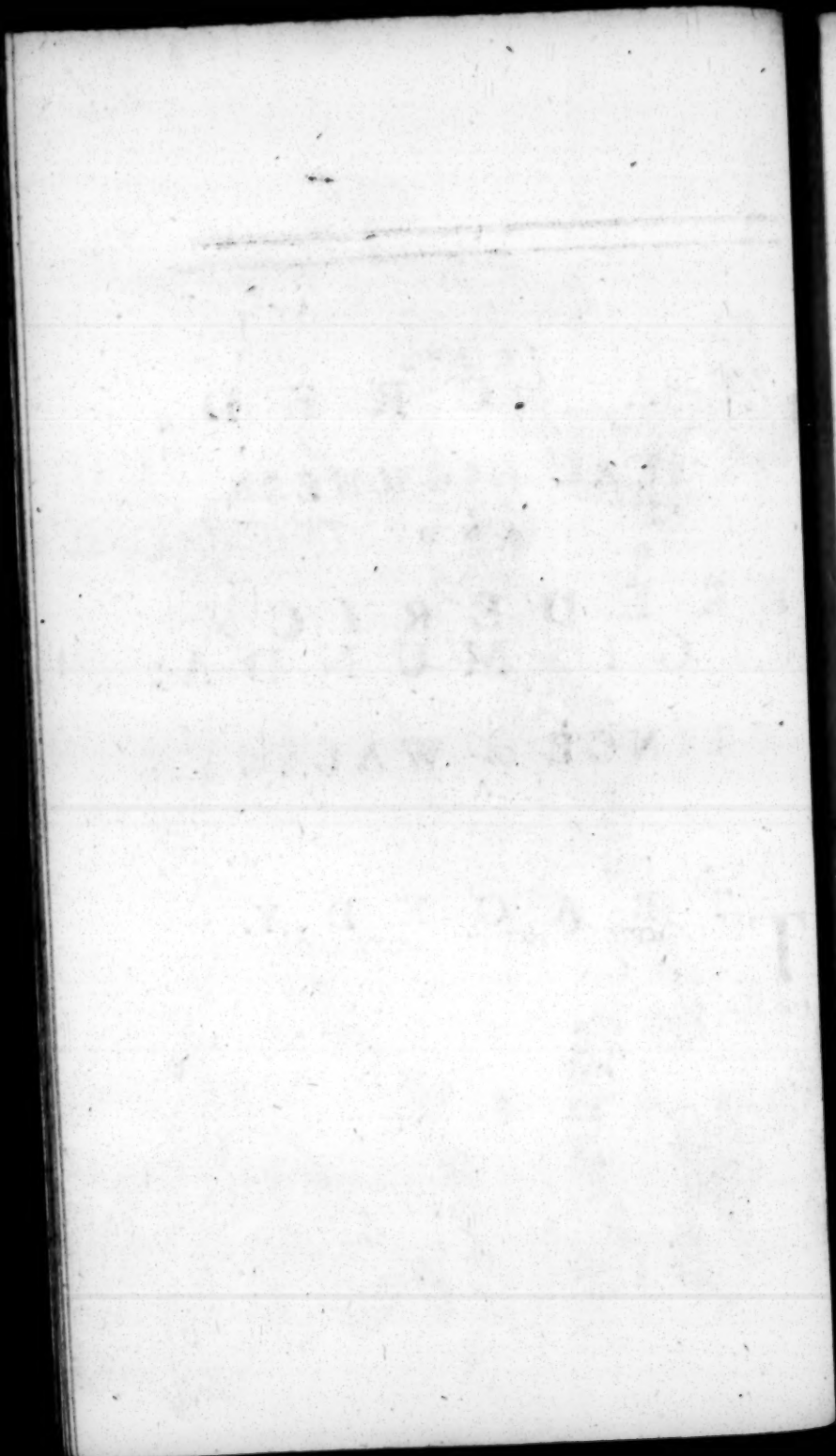
T A N C R E D

A N D

S I G I S M U N D A :

A

T R A G E D Y.



TO HIS
ROYAL HIGHNESS,
FREDERICK,
PRINCE of WALES.

SIR,

THE honour your ROYAL HIGH-
NESS has done me in the pro-
tection you was pleased to give to this
tragedy, emboldens me to lay it now
at your feet, and beg your permission
to publish it under your royal patron-
age. The favouring and protecting of
letters has been, in all ages and coun-
tries, one distinguishing mark of a great

lxvi DEDICATION.

Prince ; and that with good reason, not only as it shews a justness of taste, and elevation of mind, but as the influence of such a protection, by exciting good writers to labour with more emulation in the improvement of their several talents, not a little contributes to the embellishment and instruction of society. But of all the different species of writing, none has such an effect upon the lives and manners of men as the dramatic ; and therefore that of all others most deserves the attention of princes, who, by a judicious approbation of such pieces as tend to promote all public and private virtue, may more than by any coercive methods secure the purity of the stage, and in consequence thereof greatly advance the morals and politeness of their people. How eminently your ROYAL HIGHNESS has always extended your favour and patronage to every art and science, and in a particular manner to dramatic performances, is too well known to the world for me to mention it here. Allow me only to wish, that

DEDICATION. Ixvii

what I have now the honour to offer to your ROYAL HIGHNESS, may be judged not unworthy of your protection, at least in the *Sentiments* which it inculcates. A warm and grateful sense of your goodness to me makes me desirous to seize every occasion of declaring in public, with what profound respect and dutiful attachment I am,

S I R,

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS'S

Most obliged,

Most obedient, and

Most devoted servant,

JAMES THOMSON.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS play is considerably shortened in the performance; but I hope it will not be disagreeable to the reader to see it as it was at first written; there being a great difference betwixt a play in the closet, and upon the stage.

P R O L O G U E.

BOLD is the man! who, in this woe's age,
Presumes to tread the chaste corrected stage.
Now, with gay tinsel arts, we can no more
Conceal the want of nature's sterling ore.
Our spells are vanish'd, broke our magic wand,
That us'd to waft you over sea and land.
Before your light the fairy people fade,
The demons fly—The ghost itself is laid.
In vain of martial scenes the loud alarms,
The mighty prompter thundering out to arms,
The play-house posse clattering from afar,
The close-wedg'd battle, and the din of war.
Now even the senate seldom we convene;
The yawning fathers nod behind the scene.
Your taste rejects the glittering false sublime,
To sigh in metaphor, and die in rhyme.
High rant is tumbled from his gallery throne:
Description, dreams,—nay, similies are gone:
What shall we then? to please you how devise,
Whose judgment sits not in your ears and eyes?
Thrice happy! could we catch great Shakespear's art,
To trace the deep recesses of the heart;
His simple plain sublime, to which is given
To strike the soul with darted flame from heaven:
Could we awake soft Otway's tender woe,
The pomp of verse and golden lines of Rowe.
We to your hearts apply: let them attend;
Before their silent candid bar we bend.
If warm'd they listen, 'tis our noblest praise;
If cold, they wither all the muse's bays.

The PERSONS.

TANCRED, Count of <i>Lecce</i> ,	Mr Garrick.
MATTEO SIFFREDI, Lord High Chancellor of <i>Sicily</i> ,	Mr Sheridan.
Earl OSMOND, Lord High Con- stable of <i>Sicily</i> ,	Mr Delane.
RODOLPHO, friend to TANCRED, and Captain of the guards,	Mr Havard.
SIGISMUNDA, daughter of SIF- FREDI,	Mrs Cibber.
LAURA, sister of RODOLPHO, and friend to SIGISMUNDA,	Miss Budget.

Barons, Officers, Guards, &c.

SCENE, *The City of Palermo in Sicily.*

T A N C R E D
A N D
S I G I S M U N D A.
A
T R A G E D Y.

ACT I. SCENE I.

SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

SIGISMUNDA.

A H fatal day to Sicily! The king
Approaches his last moments?

Laur. So 'tis fear'd.

Sigif. The death of those distinguish'd by their station,

But by their virtue more, awakes the mind
To solemn dread, and strikes a saddening awe:
Not that we grieve for them, but for ourselves,
Left to the toil of life—And yet the best
Are, by the playful children of this world,
At once forgot, as they had never been.

Laura, 'tis said—the heart is sometimes charg'd
 With a prophetic sadness : such, methinks,
 Now hangs on mine. The king's approaching death
 Suggests a thousand fears. What troubles thence
 May throw the state once more into confusion,
 What sudden changes in my father's house
 May rise, and part me from my dearest Tancred,
 Alarms my thought.

Laur. The fears of love-sick fancy!
 Perversely busy to torment itself.
 But be assur'd your father's steady friendship,
 Join'd to a certain genius, that commands,
 Not kneels to fortune, will support and cherish,
 Here in the public eye of Sicily,
 This—I may call him—his adopted son,
 The noble Tancred, form'd to all his virtues.

Sigis. Ah form'd to charm his daughter !—This fair
 morn

Has tempted far the chace. Is he not yet
 Return'd ?

Laur. No,—When your father to the king,
 Who now expiring lyes, was call'd in haste,
 He sent each way his messengers to find him ;
 With such a look of ardor and impatience,
 As if this near event was to Count Tancred
 Of more importance than I comprehend.

Sigis. There lyes, my Laura, o'er my Tancred's birth
 A cloud I cannot pierce. With princely accost,
 Nay, with respect, which oft I have observ'd,
 Stealing at times submissive o'er his features,
 In Belmont's woods my father rear'd his youth—
 Ah woods ! where first my artless bosom learn'd
 The sighs of love.—He gives him out the son
 Of an old friend, a baron of Apulia,
 Who in the late crusade bravely fell.
 But then 'tis strange ; is all his family,

As well as father, dead? and all their friends,
 Except my sire, the generous good Siffredi?
 Had he a mother, sister, brother left,
 The last remain of kindred; with what pride,
 What rapture, might they fly o'er earth and sea,
 To claim this rising honour of their blood!
 This bright unknown! this all-accomplish'd youth!
 Who charms—too much—the heart of Sigismunda!

Laura, perhaps your brother knows him better,
 The friend and partner of his freest hours.
 What says Rodolpho? Does he truly credit
 This story of his birth?

Laur. He has sometimes,
 Like you his doubts; yet, when maturely weigh'd,
 Believes it true. As for Lord Tancred's self,
 He never entertain'd the slightest thought
 That verg'd to doubt; but oft laments his state,
 By cruel fortune so ill pair'd to yours.

Sigis. Merit like his, the fortune of the mind,
 Beggars all wealth—Then to your brother, Laura,
 He talks of me?

Laur. Of nothing else. Howe'er
 The talk begin, it ends with Sigismunda.
 Their morning, noontide, and their evening walks
 Are full of you; and all the woods of Belmont
 Enamour'd with your name—

Sigis. Away, my friend;
 You flatter—yet the dear delusion charms.

Laur. No, Sigismunda, 'tis the strictest truth,
 Nor half the truth, I tell you. Even with fondness
 My brother talks for ever of the passion
 That fires young Tancred's breast. So much it strikes
 He praises love as if he were a lover. [him,
 He blames the false pursuits of vagrant youth,
 Calls them gay folly, a mistaken struggle
 Against best-judging nature. Heaven, he says,

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In lavish bounty form'd the heart for love ;
In love included all the finer seeds
Of honour, virtue, friendship, purest bliss——

Sigif. Virtuous Rodolpho !

Laur. Then his pleasing theme
He varies to the praises of your lover——

Sigif. And what, my Laura, says he on the subject !

Laur. He says that, tho' he were not nobly born,
Nature has form'd him noble, generous, brave,
Truly magnanimous, and warmly scorning
Whatever bears the smallest taint of baseness :
That every easy virtue is his own ;
Not learnt by painful labour, but inspir'd,
Implanted in his soul—Chiefly one charm
He in his graceful character observes ;
That though his passions burn with high impatience,
And sometimes, from a noble heat of nature,
Are ready to fly off ; yet the least check
Of ruling reason brings them back to temper,
And gentle softness.

Sigif. True ! O true, Rodolpho !
Blest be thy kindred worth for loving his !
He is all warmth, all amiable fire,
All quick heroic ardor ! temper'd soft
With gentleness of heart, and manly reason !
If virtue were to wear a human form,
To light it with her dignity and flame,
Then softning mix her smiles and tender graces ;
O she would chuse the person of my Tancred !
Go on, my friend, go on, and ever praise him ;
The subject knows no bounds, nor can I tire,
While my breast trembles to that sweetest music !
The heart of woman tastes no truer joy,
Is never flatter'd with such dear enchantment—
'Tis more than selfish vanity—as when
She hears the praises of the man she loves——

Laur. Madam, your father comes,

SCENE II.

SIFFREDI, SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

Sif. [To an attendant as he enters.] Lord Tancred
Is found? [then

Att. My Lord, he quickly will be here.
I scarce could keep before him, tho' he bid me
Speed on, to say he would attend your orders.

Sif. 'Tis well—retire—you, too, my daughter,
leave me.

Sigif. I go, my father—But how fares the king?

Sif. He is no more. Gone to that awful state,
Where kings the crown wear only of their virtues.

Sigif. How bright must then be his!—This stroke
is sudden.

He was this morning well when to the chace
Lord Tancred went.

Sif. 'Tis true. But at his years
Death gives short notice—Drooping nature then,
Without a gust of pain to shake it, falls.
His death, my daughter, was that happy period
Which few attain. The duties of his day
Were all discharg'd, and gratefully enjoy'd
Its noblest blessings; calm, as evening skies,
Was his pure mind, and lighted up with hopes
That open heaven; when, for his last long sleep
Timely prepar'd, a lassitude of life,
A pleasing weariness of mortal joy,
Fell on his soul, and down he sunk to rest.
O may my death be such!—He but one wish
Left unfulfill'd, which was to see Count Tancred—

Sigif. To see Count Tancred!—Pardon me, my
Lord—

Sif. For what my daughter?—But, with such emotion,

Why did you start at mention of Count Tancred?

Sigsf. Nothing—I only hop'd the dying king
Might mean to make some generous just provision
For this your worthy charge, this noble orphan.

Sif. And he has done it largely—Leave me now—
I want some private conference with Lord Tancred.

S C E N E III.

SIFFREDI alone.

My doubts are but too true—If these old eyes
Can trace the marks of love, a mutual passion
Has seiz'd, I fear, my daughter and this Prince,
My sovereign now—Should it be so? Ah there
There lurks a brooding tempest, that may shake
My long concerted scheme, to settle firm
The public peace and welfare, which the king
Has made the prudent basis of his will—
Away, unworthy views! you shall not tempt me!
Nor interest, nor ambition shall seduce
My fixt resolve—perish the selfish thought,
Which our own good prefers to that of millions!—
He comes—my King—unconscious of his fortune.

S C E N E IV.

TANCRED, SIFFREDI.

Tanc. My Lord Siffredi, in your looks I read,
Confirm'd, the mournful news that fly abroad
From tongue to tongue—We then, at last, have lost
The good old king!

Sif. Yes, we have lost a father!
The greatest blessing Heaven bestows on mortals,
And seldom found amidst these wilds of time.

A good, a worthy king!—Hear me, my Tancred,
And I will tell thee, in a few plain words,
How he deserv'd that best, that glorious title.
'Tis nought complex, 'tis clear as truth and virtue.
He lov'd his people, deem'd them all his children;
The good exalted, and depress'd the bad:
He spurn'd the flattering crew, with scorn rejected
Their smooth advice that only means themselves,
Their schemes to agrandize him into baseness:
Nor did he less disdain the secret breath,
The whisper'd tale, that blights a virtuous name.
He fought alone the good of those for whom
He was entrusted with the sovereign power:
Well knowing that a people, in their rights
And industry protected, living safe
Beneath the sacred shelter of the laws,
Encourag'd in their genius, arts, and labours,
And happy each as he himself deserves,
Are ne'er ~~en~~ingrateful. With unsparing hand
They will for him provide: their filial love
And confidence are his unfailing treasure,
And every honest man his faithful guard.

Tanc. A general face of grief o'erspreads the city.
I mark'd the people, as I hither came,
In crouds assembled, struck with silent sorrow,
And pouring forth the noblest praise of tears.
Those, whom remembrance of their former woes,
And long experience of the vain illusions
Of youthful hope, had into wise consent
And fear of change corrected, wrung their hands,
And often casting up their eyes to heaven,
Gave sign of sad conjecture. Others shew'd,
Athwart their grief, or real or affected,
A gleam of expectation, from what chance
And change might bring. A mingled murmur run
Along the streets; and, from the lonely court

Of him who can no more assist their fortunes,
I saw the courtier-fry, with eager haste,
All hurrying to Constantia.

Sif. Noble youth !

I joy to hear from thee these just reflections,
Worthy of riper years——But if they seek
Constantia, trust me, they mistake their course.

Tanc. How ! Is she not, my Lord, the late king's
sister,

Heir to the crown of Sicily ? the last
Of our fam'd Norman line, and now our queen ?

Sif. Tancred, 'tis true ; she is the late king's sister,
The sole surviving offspring of that tyrant
William the bad——so for his vices stil'd ;
Who spilt much noble blood, and sore oppress'd
Th' exhausted land : whence grievous war arose,
And many a dire convulsion shook the state.
When he, whose death Sicilia mourns to-day,
William, who has and well deserv'd the name
Of *Good*, succeeding to his father's throne,
Reliev'd his country's woes——But to return——
She is the late king's sister, born some months
After the tyrant's death, but not next heir.

Tanc. You much surprize me---May I then presume
To ask who is?

Sif. Come nearer, noble Tancred,
Son of my care ! I must, on this occasion,
Consult thy generous heart ; which, when conducted
By rectitude of mind and honest virtues,
Gives better counsel than the hoary head——
Then know, there lives a Prince, here in Palermo,
The lineal offspring of our famous hero,
Roger the First.

Tanc. Great Heaven !---How far remov'd
From that our mighty founder ?

Sif. His great grandson :

Sprung from his eldest son, who died untimely,
Before his father.

Tanc. Ha ! the Prince you mean,
Is he not Manfred's son ? the generous, brave,
Unhappy Manfred ! whom the tyrant William,
You just now mentioned, not content to spoil
Of his paternal crown, threw into fetters,
And infamously murder'd.

Sif. Yes—the same.

Tanc. By Heavens ! I joy to find our Norman reign,
The world's sole light amidst these barbarous ages !
Yet rears its head ; and shall not, from the lance,
Pass to the feeble distaff---But this Prince
Where has he lain conceal'd ?

Sif. The late good king,
By noble pity mov'd, contriv'd to save him
From his dire father's unrelenting rage ;
And had him rear'd in private, as became
His birth and hopes, with high and princely nurture,
Till now, too young to rule a troubled state,
By civil broils most miserably torn,
He in his safe retreat has lain conceal'd,
His birth and fortune to himself unknown ;
But when the dying king to me entrusted,
As to the chancellor of the realm, his will,
His successor he nam'd him.

Tanc. Happy youth !

He then will triumph o'er his father's foes,
O'er haughty Osmond, and the tyrant's daughter.

Sif. Ay, that is what I dread—that heat of youth ;
There lurks, I fear, perdition to the state ;
I dread the horrors of rekindled war :
Tho' dead, the tyrant still is to be fear'd ;
His daughter's party still is strong, and numerous :
Her friend, Earl Osmond, Constable of Sicily,
Experienc'd, brave, high-born, of mighty interest,

Better the Prince and Princess should by marriage
 Unite their friends, their interest and their claims;
 Then will the peace and welfare of the land
 On a firm basis rise.

Tanc. My Lord Siffredi,
 If by myself I of this Prince may judge
 That scheme will scarce succeed -- Your prudent age
 In vain will counsel, if the heart forbid it—
 But wherefore fear? The right is clearly his;
 And, under your direction, with each man
 Of worth, and stedfast loyalty, to back
 At once the king's appointment and his birthright,
 There is no ground for fear. They have great odds,
 Against th' astonish'd sons of violence,
 Who fight with awful justice on their side.
 All Sicily will rouse, all faithful hearts
 Will range themselves around Prince Manfred's son,
 For me, I here devote me to the service
 Of this young Prince; I every drop of blood
 Will lose with joy, with transport in his cause—
 Pardon my warmth—but that, my Lord, will never
 To this decision come—Then find the Prince;
 Lose not a moment to awaken in him
 The royal soul. Perhaps he now desponding
 Pines in a corner, and laments his fortune;
 That in the narrower bounds of private life
 He must confine his aims, those swelling virtues
 Which from his noble father he inherits.

Sif. Perhaps, regardless, in the common bane
 Of youth he melts in vanity and love.
 But if the seeds of virtue glow within him,
 I will awake a higher sense, a love
 That grasps the loves and happiness of millions.

Tanc. Why that surmise? Or should he love, Sif-
 fredi,
 I doubt not, it is nobly, which will raise

And animate his virtues—O permit me,
 To plead the cause of youth—Their virtue oft,
 In pleasure's soft enchantment lull'd a while,
 Forgets itself; it sleeps and gayly dreams,
 Till great occasion rouse it; then all flame,
 It walks abroad, with heighten'd soul and vigour,
 And by the change astonishes the world.
 Even with a kind of sympathy, I feel
 The joy that waits this Prince; when all the powers,
 Th' expanding heart can wish, of doing good;
 Whatever swells ambition, or exalts
 The human soul into divine emotions,
 All croud at once upon him.

Sif. Ah, my Tancred,

Nothing so easy as in speculation,
 And at a distance seen the course of honour,
 A fair delightful champain strew'd with flowers.
 But when the practice comes; when our fond passions,
 Pleasure, and pride, and self-indulgence, throw
 Their magic dust around, the prospect roughens:
 The dreadful passes, craggy mountains rise,
 Cliffs to be scal'd, and torrents to be stem'd:
 Then toil ensues, and perseverance stern;
 And endless combats with our grosser sense,
 Oft lost, and oft renew'd; and generous pain
 For others felt; and, harder lesson still!
 Our honest bliss for others sacrific'd:
 And all the rugged task of virtue quails
 The stoutest heart of common resolution.
 Few get above this turbid scene of strife,
 Few gain the summit, breathe that purest air,
 That heavenly æther, which untroubled sees
 The storm of vice and passion rage below.

Tanc. Most true, my Lord. But why thus augur ill?
 You seem to doubt this Prince. I know him not.
 Yet oh, methinks, my heart could answer for him!

The juncture is so high, so strong the gale
That blows from heaven, as thro' the deadeſt ſoul
Might breathe the godlike energy of virtue.

Sif. Hear him, immortal ſhades of his great fa-
thers !

Forgive me, Sir, this trial of your heart :
Thou ! thou art he !

Tanc. Siffredi !

Sif. Tancred, thou !
Thou art the man, of all the many thouſands
That toil upon the boſom of this iſle,
By Heaven eleſted to command the reſt,
To rule, proteſt them, and to make them happy.

Tanc. Manfred my father ! I the laſt ſupport
Of the ſam'd Norman line, that awes the world !
I ! who this morning wander'd forth an orphan,
Outcaſt of all but thee, my ſecond father !
Thus call'd to glory ! to the firſt great lot
Of human kind !—O wonder-working hand
That, in majeſtic ſilence, ſways at will
The mighty movements of unbounded nature ;
O grant me, Heaven ! the virtues to ſuſtain
This awful burden of ſo many heroes !
Let me not be exalted into ſhame,
Set up the worthleſs pageant of vain grandeur.

Mean-time I thank the juſtice of the king,
Who has my right bequeath'd me. Thee, Siffredi,
I thank thee—O I ne'er enough can thank thee !
Yes, thou haſt been—thou art—ſhalt be my father !
Thou ſhalt direct my unexperienc'd years,
Shalt be the ruling head, and I the hand.

Sif. It is enough for me—to ſee my ſovereign
Aſſert his virtues, and maintain his honour.

Tanc. I think, my Lord, you ſaid the king com-
mitted

To you his will. I hope it is not clogg'd

With any base conditions, any clause
 To tyrannize my heart, and to Constantia
 Enslave my hand devoted to another.
 The hint you just now gave of that alliance,
 You must imagine, wakes my fear. But know,
 In this alone I will not bear dispute,
 Not even from thee, Siffredi!—Let the council
 Be strait assembled, and the will there opened:
 Thence issue speedy orders to convene,
 This day ere noon, the senate: where those barons
 Who now are in Palermo, will attend
 To pay their ready homage to the king,
 Their rightful king, who claims his native crown,
 And will not be a king by deeds and parchments.

Sif. I go, my Liege. But once again permit me
 To tell you—Now, now, is the trying crisis
 That must determine of your future reign.
 O with heroic rigour watch your heart!
 And to the sovereign duties of a king,
 Th' unequal'd pleasures of a God on earth,
 Submit the common joys, the common passions,
 Nay, even the virtues of the private man.

Tanc. Of that no more. They not oppose, but aid,
 Invigorate, cherish, and reward each other.
 The kind all-ruling Wisdom is no tyrant.

S C E N E V.

TANCRED *alone.*

Now, generous Sigismunda, comes my turn
 To shew my love was not of thine unworthy,
 When fortune bade me blush to look to thee.
 But what is fortune to the wish of love?
 A miserable bankrupt! O 'tis poor,
 'Tis scanty all, whate'er we can bestow!
 The wealth of kings is wretchedness and want!—

Quick let me find her! taste that highest joy,
Th' exalted heart can know, the mix'd effusion
Of gratitude and love!—Behold, she comes!

S C E N E VI.

TANCRED, SIGISMUNDA.

Tanc. My fluttering soul was all on wing to find
My love! my Sigismunda! [thee,

Sigif. O my Tancred!
Tell me, what means this mystery and gloom
That lowers around. Just now involv'd in thought
Thy father shot athwart me—You, my Lord,
Seem strangely mov'd—I fear some dark event
From the king's death to trouble our repose,
That tender calm we in the woods of Belmont
So happily enjoy'd—Explain this hurry,
What means it? Say.

Tanc. It means that we are happy!
Beyond our most romantic wishes, happy!

Sigif. You but perplex me more.

Tanc. It means, my fairest!
That thou art queen of Sicily; and I
The happiest of mankind! than monarch more!
Because with thee I can adorn my throne.
Manfred, who fell by tyrant William's rage,
Fam'd Roger's lineal issue, was my father. [Pausing,

You droop, my love; dejected on a sudden;
You seem to mourn my fortune—The soft tear
Springs in thy eye—O let me kiss it off—
Why this, my Sigismunda?

Sigif. Royal Tancred,
None at your glorious fortune can like me
Rejoice—yet me alone, of all Sicilians,
It makes unhappy.

Tanc. I should hate it then!

Should throw, with scorn, the splendid ruin from
No, Sigismunda, 'tis my hope with thee [me!—
To share it, whence it draws its richest value.

Sigif. You are my sovereign—I at humble distance—

Tanc. Thou art my queen! the sovereign of my
You never reign'd with such triumphant lustre, [soul!
Such winning charms as now; yet, thou art still
The dear, the tender, generous Sigismunda!
Who with a heart exalted far above
Those selfish views, that charm the common breast,
Stoop'd from the height of life, and courted beauty,
Then, then, to love me, when I seem'd of fortune
The hopeless outcast, when I had no friend,
None to protect and own me but thy father.
And would'st thou claim all goodness to thyself?
Can'st thou thy Tancred deem so dully form'd,
Of such gross clay, just as I reach the point—
A point my wildest hopes could never image—
In that great moment, full of every virtue,
That I should then so mean a traitor prove
To the best bliss and honour of mankind,
So much disgrace the human heart, as then,
For the dead form of flattery and pomp,
The faithless joys of courts, to quit kind truth,
The cordial sweets of friendship and of love,
The life of life! my all, my Sigismunda!
I could upbraid thy fears, call them unkind,
Cruel, unjust, an outrage to my heart,
Did they not spring from love.

Sigif. Think not, my Lord,
That to such vulgar doubts I can descend.
Your heart, I know, disdains the little thought
Of changing with the vain external change
Of circumstance and fortune. Rather thence
It would, with rising ardor, greatly feel

A noble pride to shew itself the same.
But, ah ! the hearts of kings are not their own.
There is a haughty duty that subjects them
To chains of state, to wed the public welfare,
And not indulge the tender private virtues.
Some high-descended princess, who will bring
New power and interest to your throne, demands
Your royal hand—perhaps Constantia.——

Tanc. She !

O name her not ! Were I this moment free,
And disengag'd as he who never felt
The powerful eye of beauty, never sigh'd
For matchless worth like thine, I should abhor
All thoughts of that alliance. Her fell father
Most basely murder'd mine ; and she his daughter,
Supported by his barbarous party, still
His pride inherits, his imperious spirit
And insolent pretensions to my throne.
And canst thou deem me then so poorly tame,
So cool a traitor to my father's blood,
As from the prudent cowardice of state
E'er to submit to such a base proposal ?
Detested thought ! Oh doubly, doubly hateful !
From the two strongest passions ; from aversion
To this Constantia—and from love to thee.

Custom, 'tis true, a venerable tyrant,
O'er servile man extends her blind dominion :
The pride of kings enslaves them ; their ambition,
Or interest, lords it o'er the better passions.
But vain their talk, mask'd under specious words
Of station, duty, and of public good :
They whom just Heaven has to a throne exalted,
To guard the rights and liberties of others,
What duty binds them to betray their own ?
For me, my free-born heart shall bear no dictates,
But those of truth and honour ; wear no chains,

But the dear chains of love and Sigismunda.
 Or if indeed my choice must be directed
 By views of public good, whom shall I chuse
 So fit to grace, to dignify a crown,
 And beam sweet mercy on a happy people,
 As thee, my love? whom place upon my throne
 But thee, descended from the good Siffredi?
 'Tis fit that heart be thine, which drew from him
 Whate'er can make it worthy thy acceptance.

Sigis. Cease, cease, to raise my hopes 'above my
 duty.

Charm me no more, my Tancred!—O that we
 In those blest woods, where first you won my soul,
 Had pass'd our gentle days; far from the toil
 And pomp of courts! Such is the wish of love;
 Of love, that, with delightful weakness, knows
 No bliss and no ambition but itself.

But in the world's full light, those charming dreams,
 Those fond illusions vanish. Awful duties,
 The tyranny of men, even your own heart,
 Where lurks a sense your passion stifles now,
 And proud imperious honour call you from me.
 'Tis all in vain—You cannot hush a voice
 That murmurs here—I must not be persuaded!

Tanc. [kneeling.] Hear me, thou soul of all my
 hopes and wishes!

And witness, Heaven! prime source of love and joy!
 Not a whole warring world combin'd against me;
 Its pride, its splendor, its imposing forms,
 Nor interest, nor ambition, nor the face
 Of solemn state, not even thy father's wisdom
 Shall ever shake my faith to Sigismunda.

[Trumpets and acclamations heard.]

But, hark! the public voice to duties call me,
 Which with unweary'd zeal I will discharge;
 And thou, yes thou, shalt be my bright reward—

Yet—ere I go—to hush thy lovely fears,
Thy delicate objections—— [Writes his name.
Take this blank,
Sign'd with my name, and give it to thy father :
Tell him, 'tis my command it be fill'd up
With a most strict and solemn marriage-contract.
How dear each tie ! how charming to my soul !
That more unites me to my Sigismunda.

For thee and for my people's good to live,
Is all the bliss which sovereign power can give.

The End of the First Act.

A C T II. S C E N E I.

SIFREDI *alone.*

S O far 'tis well—The late king's will proceeds
Upon the plan I counsel'd ; that Prince Tancred
Shall make Constantia partner of his throne.

O great, O wish'd event ! whence the dire seeds,
Of dark intestine broils, of civil war,
And all its dreadful miseries and crimes,
Shall be for ever rooted from the land.

May these dim eyes, long blasted by the rage
Of cruel faction and my country's woes,
Tir'd with the toils and vanities of life,
Behold this period, then be clos'd in peace !

But how this mighty obstacle surmount,
Which love has thrown betwixt ? Love that disturbs
The schemes of wisdom still ; that, wing'd with pas-
sion,

Blind and impetuous in its fond pursuits,
Leaves the grey-headed reason far behind.

Alas ! how frail the state of human bliss !

When even our honest passions oft destroy it.

I was to blame, in solitude and shades,

Infectious scenes ! to trust their youthful hearts.

Would I had mark'd the rising flame ! that now

Burns out with dangerous force—My daughter owns

Her passion for the king ; she trembling own'd it,

With prayers and tears and tender supplications,

That almost shook my firmness—And this blank,

Which his rash fondness gave her, shews how much,

To what a wild extravagance he loves—

I see no means—it foils my deepest thought—

How to controul this madness of the king,

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M

That wears the face of virtue, and will thence
 Disdain restraint, will from his generous heart
 Borrow new rage, even speciously oppose
 To reason, reason—But it must be done.
 My own advice, of which I more and more
 Approve, the strict conditions of the will,
 Highly demand his marriage with Constantia;
 Or else her party has a fair pretence, —
 And all, at once, is horror and confusion—
 How issue from this maze?—The crouding barons
 Here summon'd to the palace, meet already,
 To pay their homage, and confirm the will.
 On a few moments hangs the public fate,
 On a few hasty moments—Ha! there shone
 A gleam of hope—Yes—with this very paper
 I yet will save him—Necessary means
 For good and noble ends can ne'er be wrong.
 In that resistless, that peculiar case,
 Deceit is truth and virtue—But how hold
 This lion in the toil?—O I will form it
 Of such a fatal thread, twist it so strong
 With all the ties of honour and of duty,
 That his most desperate fury shall not break
 The honest snare—Here is the royal hand——
 I will beneath it write a perfect, full,
 And absolute agreement to the will;
 Which read before the nobles of the realm
 Assembled, in the sacred face of Sicily,
 Constantia present, every heart and eye
 Fix'd on their monarch, every tongue applauding,
 He must submit, his dream of love must vanish——
 It shall be done!—To me, I know, 'tis ruin;
 But safety to the public, to the King.
 I will not reason more, I will not listen
 Even to the voice of honour—No—'tis fix'd!

S I G I S M U N D A. 91

I here devote me for my prince and country ;
Let them be safe, and let me nobly perish !

Behold Earl Osmond comes ; without whose aid
My schemes are all in vain.

S C E N E II.

OSMOND, SIFFREDI.

Os. My Lord Siffredi,
I from the Council hasten'd to Constantia,
And have accomplish'd what we there propos'd.
The Princess to the will submits her claims.
She with her presence means to grace the senate,
And of your royal charge, young Tancred's hand,
Accept. At first, indeed, it shock'd her hopes
Of reigning sole, this new surprising scene
Of Manfred's son, appointed by the king
With her joint heir——But I so fully shew'd
The justice of the case, the public good
And sure establish'd peace which thence would rise,
Join'd to the strong necessity that urg'd her,
If on Sicilia's throne she meant to sit,
As to the wise disposal of the will
Her high ambition tamed. Methought, besides,
I could discern that not from prudence merely
She to this choice submitted.

Sif. Noble Osmond,
You have in this done to the public great
And signal service. Yes, I must avow it ;
This frank and ready instance of your zeal,
In such a trying crisis of the state,
When interest and ambition might have warp'd
Your views ; I own, this truly generous virtue
Upbraids the rashness of my former judgment.

Os. Siffredi, no—To you belongs the praise ;
The glorious work is yours. Had I not seiz'd,

Improv'd the wish'd occasion to root out
 Division from the land, and save my country,
 I had been base, been infamous for ever.
 'Tis you, my Lord, to whom the many thousands,
 That by the barbarous sword of civil war
 Had fallen inglorious, owe their lives ; to you
 The sons of this fair isle, from her first peers
 Down to the swain who tills her golden plains,
 Owe their safe homes, their soft domestic hours,
 And thro' late time posterity shall bless you,
 You who advis'd this will—I blush to think,
 I have so long oppos'd the best good man
 In Sicily—With what impartial care
 Ought we to watch o'er prejudice and passion,
 Nor trust too much the jaundic'd eye of party !
 Henceforth its vain delusions I renounce,
 Its hot determinations, that confine
 All merit and all virtue to itself.
 To yours I join my hand ; with you will own
 No interest and no party but my country.
 Nor is your friendship only my ambition :
 There is a dearer name, the name of father,
 By which I should rejoice to call Siffredi.
 Your daughter's hand would to the public weal
 Unite my private happiness.

Sif. My Lord,
 You have my glad consent. To be allied
 To your distinguish'd family, and merit,
 I shall esteem an honour. From my soul
 I here embrace Earl Osmond as my friend,
 And son.

Ofm. You make him happy. This assent,
 So frank and warm, to what I long have wish'd,
 Engages all my gratitude ; at once,
 In the first blossom, it matures our friendship.

I from this moment vow myself the friend,
And zealous servant of Siffredi's house.

Enter an Officer belonging to the Court.

Off. [to *Sif.*] The King, my Lord, demands your
speedy presence.

Sif. I will attend him strait—Farewel, my Lord :
The Senate meets ; there, a few moments hence,
I will rejoin you.

Ofm. There, my noble Lord,
We will compleat this salutary work,
Will there begin a new auspicious æra.

S C E N E III.

OSMOND *alone.*

Siffredi gives his daughter to my wishes——
But does she give herself ? Gay, young, and flattered,
Perhaps engaged, will she her youthful heart
Yield to my harsher, uncomplying years ?
I am not form'd, by flattery and praise,
By sighs and tears, and all the whining trade
Of love, to feed a fair one's vanity ;
To charm at once and spoil her. . These soft arts
Nor suit my years nor temper ; these be left
To boys and doating age. A prudent father,
By nature charg'd to guide and rule her choice,
Religins his daughter to a husband's power,
Who with superior dignity, with reason,
And manly tenderness will ever love her ;
Not first a kneeling slave, and then a tyrant.

S C E N E IV.

OSMOND, Barons,

Osmon. My Lords, I greet you well. This wondrous day

Unites us all in amity and friendship;
 We meet to-day with open hearts and looks,
 Not gloom'd by party, scowling on each other,
 But all the children of one happy isle,
 The social sons of Liberty. No pride,
 No passion now, no thwarting views divide us:
 Prince Manfred's line, at last, to William's join'd,
 Combines us in one family of brothers.
 This to the late good king's well-order'd will,
 And wise Siffredi's generous care we owe.
 I truly give you joy. First of you all,
 I here renounce those errors and divisions
 That have so long disturb'd our peace, and seem'd,
 Fermenting still, to threaten new commotions—
 By time instructed let us not disdain
 To quit mistakes. We all, my Lords, have err'd.
 Men may, I find, be honest, tho' they differ.

1 *Baron.* Who follows not, my Lord, the fair example

You set us all, whate'er be his pretence,
 Loves not with single and unbiass'd heart
 His country as he ought.

2 *Baron.* O beauteous peace!

Sweet union of a state! What else, but thou,
 Gives safety, strength, and glory to a people!
 I bow, Lord Constable, beneath the snow
 Of many years; yet in my breast revives
 A youthful flame. Methinks, I see again

Those gentle days renew'd that blest'd our isle,
 Ere by this wasteful fury of division,
 Worse than our Ætna's most destructive fires,
 It desolated sunk. I see our plains
 Unbounded waving with the gifts of harvest;
 Our seas with commerce throng'd, our busy ports
 With chearful toil. Our Enna blooms afresh;
 Afresh the sweets of thymy Hybla flow.
 Our nymphs and shepherds, sporting in each vale,
 Inspire new song, and wake the pastoral reed—
 The tongue of age is found—Come, come, my sons;
 I long to see this Prince, of whom the world
 Speaks largely well—His father was my friend,
 The brave unhappy Manfred—Come, my Lords,
 We tarry here too long.

S C E N E V.

Two Officers keeping off the Croud.

One of the Croud.

Shew us our king,
 The valiant Manfred's son, who lov'd the people—
 We must, we will behold him—Give us way.
 1 Off. Pray, Gentlemen, give back—It must not
 be——
 Give back, I pray—on such a glad occasion
 I would not ill intreat the lowest of you.

2 Man of the Croud.

Nay, give us but a glimpse of our young king.
 We more than any baron of them all
 Will pay him true allegiance.

2 Off. Friends——indeed——
 You cannot pass this way——We have strict orders,
 To keep for him himself, and for the barons,

All these apartments clear—Go to the gate
That fronts the sea, you there will find admission.

All. Long live King Tancred! Manfred's son—
Huzza!

[*Croud goes off.*]

1 Off. I do not marvel at their rage of joy :
He is a brave and amiable prince.
When in my Lord Siffredi's house I liv'd,
Ere by his favour I obtain'd this office,
I there remember well the young Count Tancred.
To see him and to love him were the same.
He was so noble in his ways, yet still
So affable and mild. Well, well, old Sicily,
Yet happy days await thee!

2 Off. Grant it, Heaven!
We have seen sad and troublous times enough.
He is, they say, to wed the late king's sister,
Constantia.

1 Off. Friend, of that I greatly doubt.
Or I mistake, or Lord Siffredi's daughter,
The gentle Sigismunda, has his heart.
If one may judge by kindly cordial looks,
And fond assiduous care to please each other,
Most certainly they love——O be they blest,
As they deserve! it were great pity aught
Should part a matchless pair: the glory he,
And she the blooming grace of Sicily!

2 Off. My Lord Rodolpho comes.

S C E N E VI.

RODOLPHO *from the Senate.*

Rod. My honest friends,

You may retire.

[Officers go out.]

A storm is in the wind.

This will perplexes all. No, Tancred never
Can stoop to these conditions, which at once
Attack his rights, his honour and his love.

Those wise old men, those plodding grave state-
pedants,

Forget the course of youth ; their crooked prudence,
To baseness verging still, forgets to take

Into their fine-spun schemes the generous heart,
That thro' the cobweb system bursting lays

Their labours waste—So will this business prove,
Or I mistake the king—back from the pomp

He seem'd at first to shrink ; and round his brow

I mark'd a gathering cloud, when by his side,

As if design'd to share the public homage,

He saw the tyrant's daughter. But confess'd,

At least to me, the doubling tempest frown'd,

And shook his swelling bosom, when he heard

Th' unjust, the base conditions of the will.

Uncertain, tost in cruel agitation,

He oft, methought, address'd himself to speak

And interrupt Siffredi ; who appear'd,

With conscious haste, to dread that interruption,

And hurry'd on—But hark ! I hear a noise,

As if th' assembly rose !—Ha ! Sigismunda,

Oppress'd with grief, and wrapt in pensive sorrow,

Passes along—

[Sigismunda and Attendants pass through
the back scene. Laura advances.]

SCENE VII.

RODOLPHO, LAURA.

Laur. Your high-prais'd friend, the king,
Is false, most vilely false! the meanest slave
Had shown a nobler heart; nor grossly thus,
By the first bait ambition spread, been gull'd.
He Manfred's son! away! it cannot be!
The son of that brave prince could ne'er betray
Those rights so long usurp'd from his great fathers,
Which he, this day, by such amazing fortune,
Had just regain'd; he ne'er could sacrifice
All faith, all honour, gratitude and love,
Even just resentment of his father's fate,
And pride itself; whate'er exalts a man
Above the groveling sons of peasant-mud,
All in a moment—And for what? why truly,
For kind permission, gracious leave, to sit
On his own throne with tyrant William's daughter!

Rod. I stand amaz'd—You surely wrong him,
Laura.

There must be some mistake.

Laur. There can be none!

Siffredi read his full and free consent
Before th' applauding senate. True indeed,
A small remain of shame, a timorous weakness,
Even dastardly in falsehood made him blush
To act this scene in Sigismunda's eye,
Who sunk beneath his perfidy and baseness.
Hence, till to-morrow he adjourn'd the Senate—
To-morrow fix'd with infamy to crown him!
Then, leading off his gay triumphant Princess,
He left the poor unhappy Sigismunda,
To bend her trembling steps to that sad home
His faithless vows will render hateful to her—
He comes—farewel—I cannot bear his presence!

S C E N E VIII.

TANCRED, SIFFREDI, RODOLPHO.

Tanc. [*entering to Sif.*] Avoid me, hoary traitor!—
Go, Rodolpho,

Give orders that all passages this way
Be shut—Defend me from a hateful world,
The bane of peace and honour—then return—
What! dost thou haunt me still? O monstrous
insult!

Unparallel'd indignity! Just Heaven!
Was ever king, was ever man so treated?
So trampled into baseness!

Sif. Here, my Liege,
Here strike? I nor deserve, nor ask for mercy.

Tanc. Distraction!—O my soul—Hold, reason,
hold

Thy giddy seat—O this inhuman outrage
Unhinges thought!

Sif. Exterminate thy servant!

Tanc. All, all but this I could have borne—but
this!

This daring insolence beyond example!
This murderous stroke that slabs my peace for ever!
That wounds me there—there! where the human
heart

Most exquisitely feels.——

Sif. O bear it not,
My royal Lord! appease on me your vengeance!

Tanc. Did ever tyrant image aught so cruel?
The lowest slave that crawls upon the earth,
Robb'd of each comfort Heaven bestows on mortals,
On the bare ground has still his virtue left,
The sacred treasures of an honest heart,
Which thou hast dar'd, with rash audacious hand,

And impious fraud, in me to violate——

Sif. Behold, my Liege, that rash audacious hand,
Which not repents its crime—O glorious! happy!
If by my ruin I can save your honour.

Tanc. Such honour I renounce! with sovereign
scorn,

Greatly detest it and its mean adviser!

Hast thou not dar'd beneath my name to shelter—

My name for other purposes design'd,

Given from the fondness of a faithful heart,

With the best love o'erflowing—hast thou not

Beneath thy Sovereign's name basely presum'd

To shield a lie? a lie! in public utter'd,

To all deluded Sicily? but know,

This poor contrivance is as weak as base.

In such a wretched toil none can be held

But fools and cowards—soon thy flimsy arts,

Touch'd by my just, my burning indignation,

Shall burst like threads in flame!—Thy doating
prudence

But more secures the purpose it would shake.

Had my resolves been wavering and doubtful,

This would confirm them, make them fix'd as fate;

This adds the only motive that was wanting

To urge them on through war and desolation——

What! marry her! Constantia! her! the daughter

Of the fell tyrant who destroy'd my father!

The very thought is madness! ere thou seest

The torch of Hymen light these hated nuptials,

Thou shalt behold Sicilia wrapt in flames,

Her cities raz'd, her valleys drench'd with slaughter—

Love set aside—my pride assumes the quarrel.

My honour now is up; in spite of thee,

A world combin'd against me, I will give

This scatter'd will in fragments to the winds,

Affert my rights, the freedom of my heart,

Crush all who dare oppose me to the dust,
And heap perdition on thee !

Sif. Sir, 'tis just.

Exhaust on me your rage ; I claim it all.
But for those public threats thy passion utters,
'Tis what thou canst not do !

Tanc. I cannot ! ha !

Driven to the dreadful brink of such dishonour,
Enough to make the tamest coward brave,
And into fierceness rouse the mildest nature,
What shall arrest my vengeance ? who ?

Sif. Thyself !

Tanc. Away ! dare not to justify thy crime !
That, that alone can aggravate its horror,
Add insolence to insolence—perhaps
May make my rage forget——

Sif. O let it burst

On this grey head devoted to thy service !
But when the storm has vented all its fury,
Thou then must hear—nay more, I know, thou wilt—
Wilt hear the calm, yet stronger voice of reason.
Thou must reflect, that a whole people's safety,
The weal of trusted millions should bear down,
Thyself the judge, thy fondest partial pleasure.
Thou must reflect that there are other duties,
A nobler pride, a more exalted honour,
Superior pleasures far, that will oblige,
Compel thee, to abide by this my deed,
Unwarranted perhaps in common justice,
But which necessity, even virtue's tyrant,
With awful voice commanded—Yes, thou must,
In calmer hours, divest thee of thy love,
These common passions of the vulgar breast,
This boiling heat of youth, and be a king !
The lover of thy people !

Tanc. Truths ill-employ'd !

Abus'd to colour guilt! A king! a king!

Yes, I will be a king, but not a slave!

In this will be a king! in this my people

Shall learn to judge how I will guard their rights,

When they behold me vindicate my own.

But have I, say, been treated like a king?—

Heavens! could I stoop to such outrageous usage,

I were a mean, a shameless wretch, unworthy

To wield a sceptre in a land of slaves,

A soil abhorr'd of virtue, should belie

My father's blood, belie those very maxims,

At other times, you taught my youth—Siffredi!

[In a softened tone of voice.]

Sif. Behold, my Prince, behold thy poor old servant,

Whose darling care, these twenty years, has been

To nurse thee up to virtue; who for thee,

Thy glory and thy weal, renounces all,

All interest or ambition can pour forth;

What many a selfish father would pursue

Thro' treachery and crimes: behold him here,

Bent on his feeble knees, to beg, conjure thee,

With tears to beg thee, to controul thy passion,

And save thyself, thy honour, and thy people!

Kneeling with me behold the many thousands

To thy protection trusted: fathers, mothers,

The sacred front of venerable age,

The tender virgin and the helpless infant;

The ministers of Heaven, those who maintain,

Around thy throne, the majesty of rule;

And those, whose labour, scorched by winds and sun,

Feeds the rejoicing public: see them all,

Here at thy feet, conjuring thee to save them,

From misery and war, from crimes and rapine!

Can there be aught, kind Heaven! in self-indulgence

To weigh down these? This aggregate of love,

With which compar'd the dearest private passion

Is but the wasted dust upon the balance?
Turn not away—Oh is there not some part,
In thy great heart, so sensible to kindness,
And generous warmth, some nobler part, to feel
The prayers and tears of these, the mingled voice
Of Heaven and earth!

Tanc. There is! and thou hast touch'd it.
Rise, rise, Siffredi—Oh! thou hast undone me,
Unkind old man! O ill-entreated Tancred!
Which way so'er I turn, dishonour rears
Her hideous front—and misery and ruin!
Was it for this you took such care to form me?
For this imbued me with the quickest sense
Of shame; these finer feelings, that ne'er vex
The common mass of mortals, dully happy
In blest'd insensibility? O rather
You should have fear'd my heart, taught me that power
And splendid interest lord it still o'er virtue;
That, gilded by prosperity and pride,
There is no shame, no meanness: temper'd thus,
I had been fit to rule a venal world.

Alas! what meant thy wantonness of prudence?
Why have you rais'd this miserable conflict
Betwixt the duties of the king and man?
Set virtue against virtue?—Ah, Siffredi!
'Tis thy superfluous, thy unfeeling wisdom,
That has involv'd me in a maze of error,
Almost beyond retreat—But hold, my soul,
Thy steady purpose—Toss'd by various passions,
To this eternal anchor keep—There is,
Can be no public without private virtue—
Then mark me well, observe what I command;
It is the sole expedient now remaining—
To-morrow, when the senate meets again,
Unfold the whole, unravel the deceit;
Nor that alone, try to repair its mischief;

There all thy power, thy eloquence and interest
Exert, to reinstate me in my rights,
And from thy own dark snares to disembroil me—
Start not, my Lord—This must and shall be done!
Or here our friendship ends—Howe'er disguis'd,
Whatever thy pretence, thou art a traitor.

Sif. I should indeed deserve the name of traitor,
And even a traitor's fate, had I so slightly,
From principles so weak, done what I did,
As e'er to disavow it—

Tanc. Ha!

Sif. My Liege,
Expect not this—Tho' practis'd long in courts,
I have not so far learn'd their subtle trade,
To veer obedient with each gust of passion.
I honour thee, I venerate thy orders,
But honour more my duty. Nought on earth
Shall ever shake me from that solid rock,
Nor smiles nor frowns.——

Tanc. You will not then?

Sif. I cannot!

Tanc. Away! begone!—O my Rodolpho, come,
And save me from this traitor!—Hence, I say,
Avoid my presence strait! and know, old man,
Thou my worst foe beneath the mask of friendship,
Who, not content to trample in the dust
My dearest rights, dost with cool insolence
Persist, and call it duty; hadst thou not
A daughter that protests thee, thou should'st feel
The vengeance thou deservest—No reply!
Away!

S C E N E IX.

TANCRED, RODOLPHO.

Rod. What can incense my Prince so highly
Against his friend Siffredi?

Tanc. Friend! Rodolpho?
When I have told thee what this friend has done,
How play'd me like a boy, a base-born wretch,
Who had not heart nor spirit! thou wilt stand
Amaz'd, and wonder at my stupid patience.

Rod. I heard with mix'd astonishment and grief,
The king's unjust dishonourable will,
Void in itself—I saw you stung with rage,
And writhing in the snare; just as I went,
At your command, to wait you here—but that
Was the king's deed, not his.

Tanc. O he advis'd it!
These many years he has in secret hatch'd
This black contrivance, glories in the scheme,
And proudly plumes him with his traiterous virtue.
But that was nought, Rodolpho, nothing, nothing!
O that was gentle, blameless, to what follow'd!
I had, my friend, to Sigismunda given,
To hush her fears, in the full gush of fondness,
A blank sign'd by my hand—and he—O Heavens!
Was ever such a wild attempt!—he wrote
Beneath my name an absolute compliance
To this detested Will; nay, dared to read it
Before myself, on my insulted throne
His idle pageant plac'd—O words are weak
To paint the pangs, the rage, the indignation,
That whirl'd from thought to thought my soul in
tempest,
Now on the point to burst, and now by shame
Repress'd—But in the face of Sicily,

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All mad with acclamation, what, Rodolpho,
 What could I do? The sole relief that rose
 To my distracted mind, was to adjourn
 Th' assembly till to-morrow—But to-morrow
 What can be done?—O it avails not what!
 I care not what is done—My only care
 Is how to clear my faith to Sigismunda.
 She thinks me false! She cast a look that kill'd me!
 O I am base in Sigismunda's eye!
 The lowest of mankind, the most perfidious!

Rod. This was a strain of insolence indeed,
 A daring outrage of so strange a nature,
 As stuns me quite——

Tanc. Curs'd be my timid prudence!
 That dash'd not back, that moment, in his face,
 The bold presumptuous lie—and curs'd this hand!
 That from a start of poor dissimulation,
 Led off my Sigismunda's hated rival.
 Ah then! what, poison'd by the false appearance,
 What, Sigismunda, were thy thoughts of me?
 How, in the silent bitterness of soul,
 How didst thou scorn me! hate mankind, thyself,
 For trusting to the vows of faithless Tancred!
 For such I seem'd—I was!—The thought distracts me!
 I should have cast a flattering world aside,
 Rush'd from my throne, before them all avow'd her,
 The choice, the glory of my free-born heart,
 And spurn'd the shameful fetters thrown upon it—
 Instead of that—confusion!—what I did
 Has clinch'd the chain, confirm'd Siffredi's crime,
 And fix'd me down to infamy!

Rod. My Lord,
 Blame not the conduct, which your situation
 Tore from your tortur'd heart—What could you do?
 Had you, so circumstanc'd, in open senate,
 Before th' astonish'd public, with no friends

Prepar'd, no party form'd, affronted thus
 The haughty Princess and her powerful faction,
 Supported by this Will, the sudden stroke,
 Abrupt and premature, might have recoil'd
 Upon yourself, even your own friends revolted,
 And turn'd at once the public scale against you.
 Besides, consider had you then detected
 In its fresh guilt this action of Siffredi,
 You must with signal vengeance have chastis'd
 The treasonable deed—Nothing so mean
 As weak insulted power that dares not punish.
 And how would that have suited with your love?
 His daughter present too? Trust me, your conduct,
 Howe'er abhorrent to a heart like yours,
 Was fortunate and wise—Not that I mean
 E'er to advise submission——

Tanc. Heavens! Submission!

Could I descend to bear it, even in thought,
 Despise me, you, the world, and Sigismunda!
 Submission! No!—To-morrow's glorious light
 Shall flash discovery on this scene of baseness.
 Whatever be the risk, by Heavens! to-morrow,
 I will o'erturn the dirty lie-built schemes
 Of these old men, and shew my faithful senate,
 That Manfred's son knows to assert and wear,
 With undiminish'd dignity, that crown
 This unexpected day has plac'd upon him.

But this, my friend, these stormy gusts of pride
 Are foreign to my love—Till Sigismunda
 Be disabus'd, my breast is tumult all,
 And can obey no settled course of reason.
 I see her still, I feel her powerful image,
 That look, where with reproach complaint was mix'd,
 Big with soft woe and gentle indignation,
 Which seem'd at once to pity and to scorn me—
 O let me find her! I too long have left

My Sigismunda to converse with tears,
A prey to thoughts that picture me a villain.
But ah! how, clogg'd, with this accursed state,
A tedious world, shall I now find access?
Her father too—Ten thousand horrors croud
Into the wild fantastic eye of love—
Who knows what he may do? Come then, my friend,
And by thy sister's hand O let me steal
A letter to her bosom—I no longer
Can bear her absence, by the just contempt
She now must brand me with, inflam'd to madness,
Fly, my Rodolpho, fly! engage thy sister
To aid my letter, and this very evening
Secure an interview—I would not bear
This rack another day, not for my kingdom!
Till then deep-plung'd in solitude and shades,
I will not see the hated face of man.
Thought drives on thought, on passions passions roll;
Her smiles alone can calm my raging soul.

The End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

SIGISMUNDA *alone, sitting in a disconsolate posture.*

A H tyrant Prince ! ah more than faithless Tan-
Ungenerous and inhuman in thy falsehood ! [*cries* !
Hadst thou, this morning, when my hopeless heart,
Submissive to my fortune and my duty,
Had so much spirit left, as to be willing
To give thee back thy vows, ah ! hadst thou then
Confess'd the sad necessity thy state
Impos'd upon thee, and with gentle friendship,
Since we must part at last, our parting soften'd :
I should indeed—I should have been unhappy,
But not to this extreme—Amidst my grief,
I had with pensive pleasure, cherish'd still
The sweet remembrance of thy former love ;
Thy image still had dwelt upon my soul,
And made our guiltless woes not undelightful.
But coolly thus—How couldst thou be so cruel ?—
Thus to revive my hopes, to soothe my love,
And call forth all its tendernefs, then sink me
In black despair—What unrelenting pride
Possess'd thy breast, that thou couldst bear unmov'd
To see me bent beneath a weight of shame ?
Pangs thou canst never feel ? How couldst thou drag
me,
In barbarous triumph at a rival's car ?
How make me witness to a sight of horror ?
That hand, which, but a few short hours ago,
So wantonly abus'd my simple faith,
Before th' attesting world given to another,
Irrevocably given !—There was a time,
When the least cloud that hung upon my brow,
Perhaps imagin'd only, touch'd thy pity.

Then, brighten'd often by the ready tear,
 Thy looks were softness all; then the quick heart,
 In every nerve alive, forgot itself,
 And for each other then we felt alone.
 But now, alas! those tender days are fled;
 Now thou canst see me wretched, pierc'd with an-
 guish,
 With studied anguish of thy own creating,
 Nor wet thy harden'd eye—Hold, let me think——
 I wrong thee sure; thou canst not be so base,
 As meanly in my misery to triumph.
 What is it then? Why should I search for pain?——
 O 'tis as bad!——'Tis fickleness of nature,
 'Tis sickly love extinguish'd by ambition——
 Is there, kind Heaven, no constancy in man?
 No steadfast truth, no generous fix'd affection,
 That can bear up against a selfish world?
 No, there is none—Even Tancred is inconstant?

[Rising.]

Hence! let me fly this scene!——Whate'er I see,
 These roofs, these walls, each object that surrounds
 me,
 Are tainted with his vows——But whither fly?
 The groves are worse, the soft retreat of Belmont,
 Its deepening glooms, gay lawns, and airy summits,
 Will wound my busy memory to torture,
 And all its shades will whisper—faithless Tancred!—
 My father comes—How, sunk in this disorder,
 Shall I sustain his presence?

S C E N E II.

SIFREDI, SIGISMUNDA.

Sif. Sigismunda,
 My dearest child! I grieve to find thee thus
 A prey to tears. I know the powerful cause

From which they flow, and therefore can excuse them,
But not their wilful obstinate continuance.

Come rouse thee then, call up thy drooping spirit;
Come, wake to reason from this dream of love,
And shew the world thou art Siffredi's daughter.

Sigif. Alas! I am unworthy of that name.

Sif. Thou art indeed to blame; thou hast too rashly
Engag'd thy heart, without a father's sanction.
But this I can forgive. The king has virtues
That plead thy full excuse; nor was I void
Of blame, to trust thee to those dangerous virtues.
Then dread not my reproaches. Tho' he blames,
Thy tender father pities more than blames thee.
Thou art my daughter still; and, if thy heart
Will now resume its pride, assert itself,
And greatly rise superior to this trial,
I to my warmest confidence again
Will take thee, and esteem thee more my daughter.

Sigif. O you are gentler far than I deserve!

It is, it ever was, my darling pride,
To bend my soul to your supreme commands,
Your wisest will; and tho', by love betray'd—
Alas! and punish'd too—I have transgress'd
The nicest bounds of duty, yet I feel
A sentiment of tenderness, a source
Of filial nature springing in my breast,
That, should it kill me, shall controul this passion,
And make me all submission and obedience
To you, my honour'd Lord, the best of fathers.

Sif. Come to my arms, thou comfort of my age!
Thou only joy and hope of these grey hairs!
Come! let me take thee to a parent's heart;
There, with the kindly aid of my advice,
Even with the dew of these paternal tears,
Revive and nourish this becoming spirit——
Then thou dost promise me, my Sigismunda—

Thy father stoops to make it his request—
 Thou wilt resign thy fond presumptuous hopes,
 And henceforth never more indulge one thought
 That in the light of love regards the king!

Sigif. Hopes I have none! Those by this fatal day
 Are blasted all—But from my soul to banish,
 While weeping memory there retains her seat,
 Thoughts which the purest bosom might have cherish'd,
 Once my delight, now even in anguish charming,
 Is more, alas! my Lord, than I can promise.

Sif. Absence and time, the softner of our passions,
 Will conquer this. Meantime, I hope from thee
 A generous great effort; that thou wilt now
 Exert thy utmost force, nor languish thus
 Beneath the vain extravagance of love.
 Let not thy father blush to hear it said,
 His daughter was so weak, e'er to admit
 A thought so void of reason, that a king
 Should to his rank, his honour and his glory,
 The high important duties of a throne,
 Even to his throne itself, madly prefer
 A wild romantic passion, the fond child
 Of youthful dreaming thought and vacant hours;
 That he should quit his heaven-appointed station,
 Desert his awful charge, the care of all
 The toiling millions which this isle contains;
 Nay more, should plunge them into war and ruin;
 And all to soothe a sick imagination,
 A miserable weakness—Must for thee,
 To make thee blest, Sicilia be unhappy?
 The King himself, lost to the nobler sense
 Of manly praise, become the piteous hero
 Of some soft tale, and rush on sure destruction?
 Canst thou, my daughter, let the monstrous thought
 Possess one moment thy perverted fancy?
 Rouse thee, for shame! and if a spark of virtue

Eyes slumbering in thy soul, bid it blaze forth ;
Nor sink unequal to the glorious lesson,
This day thy lover gave thee from his throne.

Sigisf. Ah, that was not from virtue !——Had, my
father,

That been his aim, I yield to what you say ;
'Tis powerful truth, unanswerable reason.
Then, then, with sad but duteous resignation,
I had submitted as became your daughter ;
But in that moment, when my humbled hopes
Were to my duty reconcil'd, to raise them
To yet a fonder height than e'er they knew,
Then rudely dash them down—There is the sting !
The blasting view is ever present to me——
Why did you drag me to a sight so cruel ?

Sis. It was a scene to fire thy emulation.

Sigisf. It was a scene of perfidy !——But know,
I will do more than imitate the king—
For he is false !—I, tho' sincerely pierc'd
With the best, truest passion, ever touch'd
A virgin's breast, here vow to Heaven and you,
Tho' from my heart I cannot, from my hopes
To cast this Prince——What would you more, my
father ?

Sis. Yes, one thing more——thy father then is
happy——

Though by the voice of innocence and virtue
Absolv'd, we live not to ourselves alone :
A rigorous world, with peremptory sway,
Subjects us all, and even the noblest most.
This world from thee, my honour and thy own,
Demands one step ; a step, by which convinc'd
The king may see thy heart disdains to wear
A chain which his has greatly thrown aside.
'Tis fitting too, thy sex's pride commands thee,
To shew th' approving world thou canst resign,

As well as he, nor with inferior spirit,
 A passion fatal to the public weal.
 But, above all, thou must root out for ever
 From the king's breast the least remain of hope,
 And henceforth make his mention'd love dishonour.
 These things, my daughter, that must needs be done,
 Can but this way be done——by the safe refuge,
 The sacred shelter of a husband's arms.
 And there is one——

Sigis. Good Heavens! what means my Lord?

Sis. One of illustrious family, high rank,
 Yet still of higher dignity and merit,
 Who can and will protect thee; one to awe
 The king himself—Nay, hear me, Sigismunda—
 The noble Osmond courts thee for his bride,
 And has my plighted word—This day—

Sigis. [*kneeling.*] My father!

Let me with trembling arms embrace thy knees!
 O if you ever wish'd to see me happy;
 If e'er in infant years I gave you joy,
 When, as I prattling twin'd around your neck,
 You snatch'd me to your bosom, kiss'd my eyes,
 And melting said you saw my mother there;
 O save me from that worst severity
 Of fate! O outrage not my breaking heart
 To that degree—I cannot!—'tis impossible!—
 So soon withdraw it, give it to another——
 Hear me, my dearest father! hear the voice
 Of nature and humanity, that plead
 As well as justice for me!—Not to chuse
 Without your wise direction may be duty;
 But still my choice is free—That is a right,
 Which even the lowest slave can never lose.
 And would you thus degrade me? make me base?
 For such it were, to give my worthless person
 Without my heart, an injury to Osmond,

The highest can be done—Let me, my Lord——
 Or I shall die, shall by the sudden change
 Be to distraction shock'd—let me wear out
 My hapless days in solitude and silence,
 Far from the malice of a prying world !
 At least—you cannot sure refuse me this—
 Give me a little time—I will do all,
 All I can do, to please you !—O your eye
 Sheds a kind beam——

Sif. My daughter ! you abuse
 The softness of my nature. ——

Sigif. Here, my father,
 Till you relent, here will I grow for ever !

Sif. Rise, Sigismunda.—Tho' you touch my heart,
 Nothing can shake th' inexorable dictates
 Of honour, duty, and determin'd reason.
 Then by the holy ties of filial love,
 Resolve, I charge thee, to receive Earl Osmond,
 As suits the man who is thy father's choice,
 And worthy of thy hand—I go to bring him—

Sigif. Spare me, my dearest father !

Sif. [*aside.*] I must rush
 From her soft grasp, or nature will betray me !
 O grant us, Heaven ! that fortitude of mind,
 Which listens to our duty, not our passions—
 Quit me, my child !

Sigif. You cannot, O my father !
 You cannot leave me thus !

Sif. Come hither, Laura,
 Come to thy friend. Now shew thyself a friend,
 Combat her weakness ; dissipate her tears ;
 Cherish, and reconcile her to her duty.

SCENE III.

SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

Sigif. O woe on woe ! distress'd by love and duty !
O every way unhappy Sigismunda !

Laur. Forgive me, Madam, if I blame your grief,
How can you waste your tears on one so false ?
Unworthy of your tenderness ? to whom
Nought but contempt is due and indignation ?

Sigif. You know not half the horrors of my fate !
I might perhaps have learn'd to scorn his falsehood ;
Nay, when the first sad burst of tears was past,
I might have rous'd my pride and scorn'd himself—
But 'tis too much, this greatest last misfortune—
O whither shall I fly ? Where hide me, Laura,
From the dire scene my father now prepares !

Laur. What thus alarms you, Madam ?

Sigif. Can it be ?

Can I—ah no !—at once give to another
My violated heart ? in one wild moment ?
He brings Earl Osmond to receive my vows !
O dreadful change ! for Tancred, haughty Osmond !

Laur. Now, on my soul, 'tis what an outrag'd
heart,

Like your's, should wish—I should, by Heavens,
Most exquisite revenge ! [esteem it

Sigif. Revenge on whom ?

On my own heart, already but too wretched !

Laur. On him ! this Tancred ! who has basely sold,
For the dull form of despicable grandeur,
His faith, his love !—At once a slave and tyrant !

Sigif. O rail at me, at my believing folly,
My vain ill-founded hopes ; but spare him, Laura !

Laur. Who rais'd these hopes ? who triumphs o'er
that weakness ?

Pardon the word---You greatly merit him ;
Better than him, with all his giddy pomp !
You rais'd him by your smiles when he was nothing !
Where is your woman pride ? that guardian spirit
Given us to dash the perfidy of man ?
Ye powers ! I cannot bear the thought with patience !
Yet recent from the most unsparing vows
The tongue of love e'er lavish'd : from your hopes
So vainly, idly, cruelly deluded ;
Before the public thus, before your father,
By an irrevocable solemn deed,
With such inhuman scorn, to throw you from him !
To give his faithless hand, yet warm from thine,
With complicated meanness to Constantia !
And to complear his crime, when thy weak limbs
Could scarce support thee, then, of thee regardless,
To lead her off !

Sigisf. That was indeed a sight
To poison love !—to turn it into rage
And keen contempt !—What means this stupid weak-
ness

That hangs upon me ? Hence, unworthy tears !
Disgrace my cheek no more ! No more, my heart,
For one so coolly false or meanly fickle——
O it imports not which---dare to suggest
The least excuse !---Yes, traitor, I will wring
Thy pride, will turn thy triumph to confusion !
I will not pine away my days for thee,
Sighing to brooks and groves ; while, with vain pity,
You in a rival's arms lament my fate——
No ! let me perish ! ere I tamely be
That soft, that patient, gentle Sigismunda,
Who can console her with the wretched boast,
She was for thee unhappy !——If I am,
I will be nobly so !——Sicilia's daughters
Shall wondering see in me a great example

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Of one who punish'd an ill-judging heart,
Who made it bow to what it most abhorr'd!
Crush'd it to misery! for having thus
So lightly listen'd to a worthless lover!

Laur. At last it mounts! The kindling pride of
virtue!

Trust me, thy marriage will embitter his——

Sigif. O may the Furies light his nuptial torch!
Be it accurs'd as mine! for the fair peace,
The tender joys of hymeneal love,
May jealousy awak'd, and fell remorse,
Pour all their fiercest venom thro' his breast!
Where the fates lead, and blind revenge, I follow!...
Let me not think---By injur'd love! I vow,
Thou shalt, base Prince! perfidious and inhuman!
Thou shalt behold me in another's arms!
In his thou hatest! Osmond's!

Laur. That will grind

His heart with secret rage! Aye, that will sting
His soul to madness! set him up a terror,
A spectacle of woe to faithless lovers!
Your cooler thought, besides, will of the change
Approve, and think it happy. Noble Osmond,
From the same stock with him derives his birth,
First of Sicilian barons, prudent, brave,
Of strictest honour, and by all rever'd.——

Sigif. Talk not of Osmond, but perfidious Tancred!
Rail at him, rail! invent new names of scorn!
Assist me, Laura; lend my rage fresh fuel;
Support my staggering purpose, which already
Begins to fail me—Ah, my vaunts how vain!
How have I lied to my own heart!—Alas!
My tears return, the mighty flood o'erwhelms me!
Ten thousand crouching images distract
My tortur'd thought——And is it come to this?
Our hopes? our vows? our oft repeated wishes,

Breath'd from the fervent soul, and full of heaven,
To make each other happy?——come to this!

Laur. If thy own peace and honour cannot keep
Thy resolution fix'd, yet, Sigismunda,
O think how deeply, how beyond retreat
Thy father is engag'd.

Sigisf. Ah wretched weakness!
That thus enthrals my soul, that chafes thence
Each nobler thought, the sense of every duty!——
And have I then no tears for thee, my father?
Can I forget thy cares, from helpless years,
Thy tenderness for me? an eye still beam'd
With love? a brow that never knew a frown?
Nor a harsh word thy tongue? Shall I for these
Repay thy stooping venerable age,
With shame, disquiet, anguish and dishonour?
It must not be!——Thou first of angels! come,
Sweet filial piety! and firm my breast!
Yes, let one daughter to her fate submit,
Be nobly wretched—but her father happy!——
Laura! they come!——O Heavens! I cannot stand
The horrid trial!——Open, open, earth!
And hide me from their view!

Laur. Madam!——

S C E N E IV.

SIFREDI, OSMOND, SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

Sif. My daughter,
Behold my noble friend who courts thy hand,
And whom to call my son I shall be proud;
Nor shall I less be pleas'd in his alliance
To see thee happy.

Ofm. Think not I presume,
Madam, on this your father's kind consent,
To make me blest. I love you from a heart,

That seeks your good superior to my own ;
And will, by every art of tender friendship,
Consult your dearest welfare. May I hope
Yours does not disavow your father's choice ?

Sigif. I am a daughter, Sir—and have no power
O'er my own heart—I die—Support me, Laura.

[*Faints.*

Sif. Help———Bear her off—She breathes——my
daughter !———

Sigif. Oh !———

Forgive my weakness---soft---my Laura, lead me---
To my apartment.

Sif. Pardon me, my Lord,
If, by this sudden accident alarm'd,
I leave you for a moment.

S C E N E V.

OSMOND *alone.*

Let me think———

What can this mean ?———Is it to me aversion !
Or is it, as I fear'd, she loves another ?

Ha !———yes———perhaps the King, the young Count
Tancred !

They were bred up together—Surely that,
That cannot be—Has he not given his hand
In the most solemn manner to Constantia ?
Does not his crown depend upon the deed ?
No—if they lov'd, and this old statesman knew it,
He could not to a king prefer a subject.
His virtues I esteem—nay more, I trust them—
So far as virtue goes—but could he place
His daughter on the throne of Sicily———
O 'tis a glorious bribe, too much for man !———
What is it then ?———I care not what it be.
My honour now, my dignity demands,

That my propos'd alliance, by her father,
And even herself accepted, be not scorn'd.
I love her too—I never knew till now
To what a pitch I lov'd her. O she shot
Ten thousand charms into my inmost soul!
She look'd so mild, so amiably gentle,
She bow'd her head, she glow'd with such confusion,
Such loveliness of modesty! She is,
In gracious mind, in manners, and in person,
The perfect model of all female beauty!—
She must be mine——She is!——If yet her heart
Consents not to my happiness, her duty,
Join'd to my tender cares, will gain so much
Upon her generous nature—That will follow.

The man of sense, who acts a prudent part,
Not flattering steals, but forms himself the heart.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Garden belonging to Siffredi's House.

SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

SIGISMUNDA, *with a letter in her hand.*

'TIS done!---I am a slave!---the fatal vow
Has pass'd my lips!---Methought in those sad
moments,

The tombs around, the saints, the darken'd altar,
And all the trembling shrines with horror shook.

But here is still new matter of distress.

O Tancred, cease to persecute me more!

O grudge me not some calmer state of woe!

Some quiet gloom to shade my hopeless days,

Where I may never hear of love and thee!

Has Laura too conspired against my peace?

Why did you take this letter?—Bear it back—

[Giving her the letter.

I will not court new pain.

Laur. Madam, Rodolpho

Urg'd me so much, nay, even with tears conjur'd me,

But this once more to serve th' unhappy king——

For such he said he was—that tho' enrag'd,

Equal with thee, at his inhuman falsehood,

I could not to my brother's fervent prayers

Refuse this office—Read it—His excuses

Will only more expose his falsehood.

Sigif. No.

It suits not Osmond's wife to read one line

From that contagious hand—She knows too well!

Laur. He paints him out distress'd beyond expres-
sion,

Even on the point of madness. Wild as winds,

And fighting seas, he raves. His passions mix,
With ceaseless rage, all in each giddy moment,
He dies to see you, and to clear his faith.

Sigisf. Save me from that !—That would be worse
than all !

Laur. I but report my brother's words ; who then
Began to talk of some dark imposition,
That had deceiv'd us all : when, interrupted
We heard your father and Earl Osmond near,
As summon'd to Constantia's court they went.

Sigisf. Ha ! imposition ?—Well !—If I am doom'd
To be, o'er all my sex, the wretch of love,
In vain I would resist—Give me the letter—
To know the worst is some relief——Alas !
It was not thus, with such dire palpitations,
That, Tancred, once I us'd to read thy letters.

[*Attempting to read the letter, but gives it to Laura.*
Ah, fond remembrance blinds me !—Read it, Laura.

LAURA reads.

“ Deliver me, Sigismunda, from that most exqui-
“ site misery which a faithful heart can suffer—
“ To be thought base by her, from whose esteem
“ even virtue borrows new charms. When I submit-
“ ted to my cruel situation, it was not falsehood you
“ beheld; but an excess of love. Rather than endan-
“ ger that, I for a while gave up my honour. Every
“ moment till I see you stabs me with severer pangs
“ than real guilt itself can feel. Let me then con-
“ jure you to meet me in the garden, towards the
“ close of the day, when I will explain this my-
“ stery. We have been most inhumanly abused;
“ and that by the means of the very paper which I
“ gave you, from the warmest sincerity of love, to
“ assure to you the heart and hand of

“ Tancred.”

Sigis. There, Laura, there, the dreadful secret sprung!

That paper! ah that paper! it suggests
A thousand horrid thoughts—I to my father
Gave it; and he perhaps—I dare not cast
A look that way—if yet indeed you love me,
O blast me not, kind Tancred, with the truth!
O pitying keep me ignorant for ever!
What strange peculiar misery is mine?
Reduc'd to wish the man I love were false!
Why was I hurry'd to a step so rash?
Repairless woe!——I might have waited, sure,
A few short hours---No duty that forbade——
I ow'd thy love that justice; till this day
Thy love an image of all-perfect goodness!
A beam from heaven that glow'd with every virtue!
And have I thrown this prize of life away?
The piteous wreck of one distracted moment?
Oh the cold prudence of remorseless rage!
Ah parents, traitors to your childrens bliss!
Ah curs'd, ah blind revenge!---On every hand
I was betray'd---You, Laura, too, betray'd me!---

Laur. Who, who, but he, whate'er he writes, betray'd you?

Or false or pusillanimous. For once,
I will with you suppose, that this agreement
To the King's will was forg'd——Tho' forg'd, by
whom?

Your father scorns the crime. Yet what avails it?
This, if it clears his truth, condemns his spirit.
A youthful king, by love and honour fir'd,
Patient to sit on his insulted throne,
And let an outrage, of so high a nature,
Unpunish'd pass, uncheck'd, uncontradicted---
O 'tis a meanness equal even to falsehood!

Sigis. Laura, no more—We have already judg'd

Too largely without knowledge. Oft, what seems
A trifle, a mere nothing, by itself,
In some nice situations, turns the scale
Of fate, and rules the most important actions.
Yes, I begin to feel a sad preface :
I am undone from that eternal source
Of human woes---The judgment of the passions.
But what have I to do with these excuses?
O cease, my treacherous heart, to give them room!
It suits not thee to plead a lover's cause ;
Even to lament my fate is now dishonour.
Nought now remains, but with relentless purpose
To shun all interviews, all clearing up
Of this dark scene ; to wrap myself in gloom,
In solitude and shades ; there to devour
The silent sorrows ever swelling here ;
And since I must be wretched---for I must---
To claim the mighty misery myself,
Engross it all, and spare a hapless father.
Hence let me fly!--the hour approaches---

Laur. Madam,

Behold he comes---the king---

Sigis. Heavens ! how escape ?

No---I will stay---this one last meeting---Leave me.

S C E N E II.

TANCRED, SIGISMUNDA.

Tanc. And are these long long hours of torture past?
My life ! my Sigismunda !

[Throwing himself at her feet.]

Sigis. Rise, my Lord,
To see my sovereign thus no more becomes me.

Tanc. O let me kiss the ground on which you tread!
Let me exhale my soul in softest transport!
Since I again embrace my Sigismunda! *[Rising.]*

Unkind! how could'st thou ever deem me false?
 How thus dishonour love?---O I could much
 Embitter my complaint!--How low were then
 Thy thoughts of me? How didst thou then affront
 The human heart itself? After the vows,
 The fervent truth, the tender protestations,
 Which mine has often pour'd, to let thy breast
 Whate'er the appearance was, admit suspicion?

Sigif. How! when I heard myself your full consent
 To the late king's so just and prudent will?
 Heard it before you read, in solemn senate?
 When I beheld you give your royal hand,
 To her, whose birth and dignity, of right,
 Demands that high alliance? Yes, my Lord,
 You have done well. The man whom Heaven appoints
 To govern others, should himself first learn
 To bend his passions to the sway of reason.
 In all you have done well; but when you bid
 My humbled hopes look up to you again,
 And sooth'd with wanton cruelty my weakness---
 That too was well—My vanity deserv'd
 The sharp rebuke, whose fond extravagance
 Could ever dream to balance your repose,
 Your glory and the welfare of a people.

Tanc. Chide on, chide on. Thy soft reproaches
 now,

Instead of wounding, only soothe my fondness.
 No, no, thou charming consort of my soul!
 I never lov'd thee with such faithful ardour,
 As in that cruel miserable moment
 You thought me false; when even my honour stoop'd
 To wear for thee a baffled face of baseness.
 It was thy barbarous father, Sigismunda,
 Who caught me in the toil. He turn'd that paper,
 Meant for th' assuring bond of nuptial love,
 To ruin it for ever; he, he wrote

That forg'd consent, you heard, beneath my name;
 Nay, dar'd before my outrag'd throne to read it!
 Had he not been thy father—Ha! my love!
 You tremble, you grow pale.

Sigif. Oh leave me, Tancred!

Tanc. No!—Leave thee? Never! never! till you
 set

My heart at peace, till these dear lips again
 Pronounce thee mine! Without thee I renounce
 Myself, my friends, the world—Here on this hand—]

Sigif. My Lord, forget that hand, which never
 Can be to thine united—— [now

Tanc. Sigismunda!

What dost thou mean? Thy words, thy look, thy
 manner,

Seem to conceal some horrid secret—Heavens!——

No—That was wild—Distraction fires the thought!——

Sigif. Enquire no more—I never can be thine.

Tanc. What, who shall interpose? who dares at-
 To brave the fury of an injur'd king? [tempt
 Who, ere he sees thee ravish'd from his hopes,
 Will wrap all blazing Sicily in flames—

Sigif. In vain your power, my Lord—This fatal
 Join'd to my father's unrelenting will, [error,
 Has plac'd an everlasting bar betwixt us—
 I am—Earl Osmond's—wife.

Tanc. Earl Osmond's wife!——

[*After a long pause, during which they
 look at one another with the highest
 agitation and most tender distress.*]

Heavens! did I hear thee right? what! marry'd?
 marry'd?

Lost to thy faithful Tancred! lost for ever!

Could'st thou then doom me to such matchless woe,
 Without so much as hearing me—Distraction!

Alas! what hast thou done? Ah Sigismunda!——

Thy rash credulity has done a deed,
Which of two happiest lovers---that ere felt
The blissful power, has made two finish'd wretches!
But---Madness!---Sure, thou know'st it cannot be!
This hand is mine! a thousand thousand vows---

S C E N E III.

TANCRED, OSMOND, SIGISMUNDA.

Os. [*Snatching her hand from the king.*] Madam,
this hand, by the most solemn rites,

A little hour ago, was given to me:
And did not sovereign honour now command me,
Never but with my life to quit my claim,
I would renounce it---thus!

Tanc. Ha! who art thou!

Presumptuous man!

Sigis. [*Aside.*] Where is my father? Heavens!

[*Goes out.*]

Os. One thou should'st better know---Yes---view
me---One

Who can and will maintain his rights and honour,
Against a faithless prince, an upstart king,
Whose first base deed is what a harden'd tyrant
Would blush to act.

Tanc. Insolent Osmond! know,
This upstart king will hurl confusion on thee,
And all who shall invade his sacred rights,
Prior to thine---Thine founded on compulsion,
On infamous deceit; while his proceed
From mutual love and free long-plighted faith.
She is, and shall be mine!--I will annul,
By the high power with which the laws invest me,
Those guilty forms in which you have entrap'd,
Basely entrap'd, to thy detested nuptials,
My queen betroth'd; who has my heart, my hand,

And shall partake my throne—If, haughty Lord,
 If this thou didst not know, then know it now!
 And know besides, as I have told thee this,
 Shouldst thou but think to urge thy treason further—
 Than treason more! treason against my love!
 Thy life shall answer for it!

Ofm. Ha! my life!——

It moves my scorn to hear thy empty threats.
 When was it that a Norman baron's life
 Became so vile, as on the frown of kings
 To hang?—Of that, my Lord, the law must judge;
 Or if the law be weak, my guardian sword——

Tanc. Dare not to touch it, traitor! lest my rage
 Break loose, and do a deed that misbecomes me.

S C E N E IV.

TANCRED, SIFFREDI, OSMOND.

Sif. [*entering.*] My gracious Lord! what is it I behold?

My sovereign in contention with his subjects?
 Surely this house deserves from royal Tancred
 A little more regard than to be made
 A scene of trouble and unseemly jars.
 It grieves my soul, it baffles every hope,
 It makes me sick of life, to see thy glory
 Thus blasted in the bud.——Heavens! can your
 Highness

From your exalted character descend,
 The dignity of virtue; and instead
 Of being the protector of our rights,
 The holy guardian of domestic bliss,
 Unkindly thus disturb the sweet repose,
 The sacred peace of families, for which
 Alone the free-born race of man to laws
 And government submitted?

Tanc. My Lord Siffredi,
 Spare thy rebuke. The duties of my station
 Are not to me unknown—But thou, old man,
 Dost thou not blush to talk of rights invaded?
 And of our best, our dearest bliss disturb'd?
 Thou! who with more than barbarous perfidy
 Hast trampled all allegiance, justice, truth,
 Humanity itself, beneath thy feet?
 Thou know'st thou hast—I could, to thy confusion,
 Return thy hard reproaches; but I spare thee
 Before this Lord, for whose ill-sorted friendship
 Thou hast most basely sacrific'd thy daughter.
 Farewel, my Lord!—For thee, Lord Constable,
 Who dost presume to lift thy surly eye
 To my soft love, my gentle Sigismunda,
 I once again command thee, on thy life—
 Yes—chew thy rage—but mark me—on thy life,
 No further urge thy arrogant pretensions!

S C E N E V.

SIFFREDI, OSMOND.

Osm. Ha! arrogant pretensions! heaven and earth!
 What! arrogant pretensions to my wife?
 My wedded wife! where are we? In a land
 Of civil rule, of liberty and laws?——
 Not on my life pursue them?—Giddy Prince!
 My life disdains thy nod. It is the gift
 Of parent Heaven, who gave me too an arm,
 A spirit to defend it against tyrants.
 The Norman race, the sons of mighty Rollo,
 Who rushing in a tempest from the North,
 Great nurse of generous freemen! bravely won
 With their own swords their seats, and still possess
 them
 By the same noble tenure, are not us'd

To hear such language—If I now desist,
Then brand me for a coward, deem me villain !
A traitor to the public ! by this conduct
Deceiv'd, betray'd, insulted, tyranniz'd.
Mine is a common cause. My arm shall guard,
Mix'd with my own, the rights of each Sicilian,
Of social life, and of mankind in general.
Ere to thy tyrant rage they fall a prey,
I shall find means to shake thy tottering throne,
Which this illegal, this perfidious usage
Forfeits at once, and crush thee in the ruins !
Constantia is my queen !——

Sif. Lord Constable,

Let us be steadfast in the right ; but let us
Act with cool prudence, and with manly temper,
As well as manly firmness. True, I own,
Th' indignities you suffer are so high,
As might even justify what now you threaten.
But if, my Lord, we can prevent the woes,
The cruel horrors of intestine war,
Yet hold untouch'd our liberties and laws ;
O let us, rais'd above the turbid sphere
Of little selfish passions, nobly do it !
Nor to our hot intemperate pride pour out
A dire libation of Sicilian blood.

'Tis godlike magnanimity to keep,
When most provok'd, our reason calm and clear,
And execute her will, from a strong sense
Of what is right, without the vulgar aid
Of heat and passion, which, tho' honest, bear us
Often too far. Remember that my house
Protects my daughter still ; and ere I saw her
Thus ravish'd from us by the arm of power,
This hand should act the Roman father's part.
Fear not ; be temperate ; all will yet be well.
I know the king. At first his passions burst

Quick as the lightning's flash : but in his breast
Honour and justice dwell.—Trust me, to reason
He will return.

Osm. He will!—By Heavens! he shall!—
You know the king!—I wish, my Lord Siffredi,
That you had deign'd to tell me all you knew—
And would you have me wait, with dutious patience,
Till he return to reason? Ye just powers!
When he has plant'd on our necks his foot,
And trod us into slaves; when his vain pride
Is cloy'd with our submission; if, at last,
He finds his arm too weak to shake the frame
Of wide-establish'd order out of joint,
And overturn all justice; then, perchance,
He, in a fit of sickly kind repentance,
May make a merit to return to reason.
No, no, my Lord!—There is a nobler way
To teach the blind oppressive Fury reason:
Oft has the lustre of avenging steel
Unseal'd her stupid eyes—The sword is reason!

S C E N E VI.

SIFFREDI, OSMOND, RODOLPHO, *with Guards.*

Rod. My Lord High Constable of Sicily,
In the King's name, and by his special order,
I here arrest you prisoner of state.

Osm. What king? I know no king of Sicily—
Unless he be the husband of Constantia.

Rod. Then know him now—Behold his royal orders
To bear you to the castle of Palermo.

Sif. Let the big torrent foam its madness off.
Submit, my Lord—No castle long can hold
Our wrongs—This, more than friendship or alliance,
Confirms me thine; this binds me to thy fortunes,
By the strong ty of common injury,

Which nothing can dissolve—I grieve, Rodolpho,
To see the reign in such unhappy fort
Begin.

Os. The reign! the usurpation call it!
This meteor-king may blaze a while, but soon
Must spend his idle terrors—Sir, lead on—
Farewel, my Lord—More than my life and fortune,
Remember well, is in your hands—my honour!

Sif. Our honour is the same. My son, farewell—
We shall not long be parted.—On these eyes
Sleep shall not shed his balm, 'till I behold thee
Restor'd to freedom, or partake thy bonds.

Even noble courage is not void of blame,
Till nobler patience sanctifies its flame.

The End of the Fourth Act.

A C T V. S C E N E I.

SIFFREDI *alone.*

THE prospect lowers around. I found the king,
 Tho' calm'd a little, with subsiding tempest,
 As suits his generous nature, yet in love
 Abated nought, most ardent in his purpose;
 Inexorably fix'd, whate'er the risque,
 To claim my daughter, and dissolve this marriage—
 I have embark'd upon a perilous sea,
 A mighty treasure. Here the rapid youth,
 Th' impetuous passions of a lover king
 Check my bold course; and there the jealous pride,
 Th' impatient honour of a haughty Lord
 Of the first rank, in interest and dependants
 Near equal to the king, forbid retreat.
 My honour too, the same unchang'd conviction,
 That these my measures were, and still remain
 Of absolute necessity, to save
 The land from civil fury, urge me on.
 But how proceed? I only faster rush
 Upon the desperate evils I would shun.
 Whate'er the motive be, deceit, I fear,
 And harsh unnatural force are not the means
 Of public welfare or of private bliss——
 Bear witness, Heaven! thou mind-inspecting eye!
 My breast is pure. I have prefer'd my duty,
 The good and safety of my fellow subjects,
 To all those views that fire the selfish race
 Of men, and mix them in eternal broils.

Enter an Officer belonging to Siffredi.

Off. My Lord, a man of noble port, his face
 Wrap'd in disguise, is earnest for admission.

Sif. Go, bid him enter.

[*Officer goes out.*]

Ha! wrap'd in disguise!

And at this late unseasonable hour!

When o'er the world tremendous midnight reigns,

By the dire gloom of raging tempest doubled. —

S C E N E II.

SIFFREDI, OSMOND *discovering himself.*

Sif. What! ha! Earl Osmond, you? — Welcome
once more,

To this glad roof! — But why in this disguise?

Would I could hope the King exceeds his promise!

I have his faith soon as to-morrow's sun

Shall gild Sicilia's cliffs, you shall be free. —

Has some good angel turn'd his heart to justice?

Ofm. It is not by the favour of Count Tancred

That I am here. As much I scorn his favour,

As I defy his tyranny and threats —

Our friend Goffredo, who commands the castle,

On my parole, ere dawn to render back

My person, has permitted me this freedom.

Know then, the faithless outrage of to-day,

By him committed whom you call the king,

Has rous'd Constantia's court. Our friends, the
friends

Of virtue, justice, and of public faith,

Ripe for revolt, are in high ferment all.

This, this, they say, exceeds whate'er deform'd

The miserable days we saw beneath

William the Bad. This saps the solid base,

At once of government and private life;

This shameless imposition on the faith,

The majesty of senates, this loud insult,

This violation of the rights of men.

Added to these, his ignominious treatment

Of her th' illustrious offspring of our kings,
 Sicilia's hope, and now our royal mistress.
 You know, my Lord, how grossly these infringe
 The late king's will; which orders, if Count Tancred
 Make not Constantia partner of his throne,
 That he be quite excluded the succession,
 And she to Henry given, King of the Romans,
 The potent emperor Barbarossa's son,
 Who seeks with earnest instance her alliance.
 I thence of you, as guardian of the laws,
 As guardian of this will to you intrusted,
 Desire, nay more, demand, your instant aid,
 To see it put in vigorous execution.

Sis. You cannot doubt, my Lord, of my concurrence.

Who more than I have labour'd this great point?
 'Tis my own plan. And if I drop it now,
 I should be justly branded with the shame
 Of rash advice or despicable weakness.
 But let us not precipitate the matter.
 Constantia's friends are numerous and strong;
 Yet Tancred's, trust me, are of equal force.
 E'er since the secret of his birth was known,
 The people all are in a tumult hurl'd
 Of boundless joy, to hear there lives a Prince
 Of mighty Guiscard's line. Numbers, besides,
 Of powerful barons who at heart had pined,
 To see the reign of their renown'd forefathers,
 Won by immortal deeds of matchless valour,
 Pass from the gallant Normans to the Suevi,
 Will, with a kind of rage, espouse his cause——
 'Tis so, my Lord—be not by passion blinded——
 'Tis surely so——O if our prating virtue
 Dwells not in words alone——O let us join,
 My generous Osmond, to avert these woes,
 And yet sustain our tottering Norman kingdom?

Ofm. But how, Siffredi? how?—If by soft means
We can maintain our rights, and save our country,
May his unnatural blood first stain the sword,
Who with unpitying fury first shall draw it!

Sif. I have a thought—the glorious work be thine.
But it requires an awful flight of virtue,
Above the passions of the vulgar breast,
And thence from thee I hope it, noble Osmond——
Suppose my daughter, to her God devoted,
Were plac'd within some convent's sacred verge,
Beneath the dread protection of the altar——

Ofm. Ere then, by Heavens! I would devoutly
shave

My holy scap, turn whining monk myself,
And pray incessant for the tyrant's safety!——
What! how! because an insolent invader.
A sacrilegious tyrant, in contempt
Of all those noblest rights, which to maintain
Is man's peculiar pride, demands my wife;
That I shall thus betray the common cause
Of human kind, and tamely yield her up,
Even in the manner you propose——O then
I were supremely vile! degraded! shamed!
The scorn of manhood! and abhor'd of honour!

Sif. There is, my Lord, an honour, the calm
child

Of reason, of humanity and mercy,
Superior far to this punctilious demon,
That singly minds itself, and oft embroils
With proud barbarian niceties the world!

Ofm. My Lord, my Lord!——I cannot brook your
prudence——

It holds a pulse unequal to my blood——
Emblemish'd honour is the flower of virtue!
The vivifying soul! and he who slights it
Will leave the other dull and lifeless dross.

Sif. No more——You are too warm.

Ofm. You are too cool.

Sif. Too cool, my Lord?——I were indeed too cool,

Not to resent this language, and to tell thee——
I wish Earl Osmond were as cool as I
To his own selfish bliss—ay, and as warm
To that of others—But of this no more——
My daughter is thy wife—I gave her to thee,
And will against all force maintain her thine.
But think not I will catch thy headlong passions,
Whirl'd in a blaze of madness o'er the land;
Or, till the last extremity compel me,
Risque the dire means of war—The King to-morrow
Will set you free; and if by gentle means
He does not yield my daughter to your arms,
And wed Constantia, as the will requires,
Why then expect me on the side of justice——
Let that suffice.

Ofm. It does—Forgive my heat.

My rankled mind, by injuries inflam'd,
May be too prompt to take and give offence.

Sif. 'Tis pass'd—Your wrongs, I own, may well
transport

The wisest mind—But henceforth, noble Osmond,
Do me more justice, honour more my truth,
Nor mark me with an eye of squint suspicion——
These jars apart—You may repose your soul
On my firm faith and unremitting friendship.
Of that I sure have given exalted proof,
And the next sun we see shall prove it further——
Return, my son, and from your friend Goffredo
Release your word. There try, by soft repose,
To calm your breast.

Ofm. Bid the vext ocean sleep,
Swept by the pinions of the raging North——

But your frail age, by care and toil exhausted,
Demands the balm of all-repairing rest.

Sif. Soon as to-morrow's dawn shall streak the skies,
I with my friends in solemn state assembled,
Will to the palace, and demand your freedom.
Then by calm reason, or by higher means,
The King shall quit his claim, and in the face
Of Sicily, my daughter shall be yours.
Farewel.

Ofm. My Lord, good night.

S C E N E. III.

OSMOND *alone.* [*After a long pause.*]

I like him not——

Yes—I have mighty matter of suspicion.

'Tis plain—I see it lurking in his breast,

He has a foolish fondness for this king——

My honour is not safe, while here my wife

Remains—Who knows but he this very night

May bear her to some convent, as he mention'd——

The King too—tho' I smother'd up my rage,

I mark'd it well——will set me free to-morrow.

Why not to-night? He has some dark design——

By Heavens! he has——I am abus'd most grossly;

Made the vile tool of this old statesman's schemes;

Marry'd to one—ay, and he knew it—one

Who loves young Tancred! Hence her swooning, tears,

And all her soft distress, when she disgrac'd me

By basely giving her perfidious hand

Without her heart—Hell and perdition! this,

This is the perfidy!—This is the fell,

The keen, envenom'd, exquisite disgrace!

Which to a man of honour even exceeds

The falsehood of the person——But I now

Will rouse me from the poor tame lethargy

By my believing fondness cast upon me.
 I will not wait his crawling timid motions,
 Perhaps to blind me meant, which he to-morrow
 Has promis'd to pursue. No! ere his eyes
 Shall open on to-morrow's orient beam,
 I will convince him that Earl Osmond never
 Was form'd to be his dupe—I know full well
 Th' important weight and danger of the deed;
 But to a man, whom greater dangers press,
 Driven to the brink of infamy and horror,
 Rashness itself, and utter desperation,
 Are the best prudence—I will bear her off
 This night, and lodge her in a place of safety.
 I have a trusty band that waits not far.
 Hence! let me lose no time—One rapid moment
 Should ardent form, at once, and execute
 A bold design—'Tis fix'd—'Tis done!—Yes, then,
 When I have seiz'd the prize of love and honour,
 And with a friend secur'd her; to the castle
 I will repair, and claim Goffredo's promise
 To rise with all his garrison—my friends
 With brave impatience wait. The mine is laid,
 And only wants my kindling touch to spring.

S C E N E IV.

Sigismunda's Apartment.

SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

Laur. Heav'n's! 'tis a fearful night!

Sigif. Ah! the black rage

Of midnight tempest, or th' assuring smiles
 Of radiant morn, are equal all to me.

Nought now has charms or terrors to my breast,
 The seat of stupid woe!—Leave me, my Laura.
 Kind rest, perhaps, may hush my woes a little—
 Oh for that quiet sleep that knows no morning!

Laur. Madam, indeed I know not how to go.
Indulge my fondness—Let me watch a while
By your sad bed, till these dread hours shall pass.

Sigif. Alas! what is the toil of elements,
This idle perturbation of the sky,
To what I feel within!—Oh that the fires
Of pitying Heaven would point their fury here!
Good night, my dearest Laura!

Laur. Oh I know not
What this oppression means—but 'tis with pain,
With tears, I can persuade myself to leave you—
Well then—Good night, my dearest Sigismunda!

S C E N E V.

SIGISMUNDA.

And am I then alone?—The most undone,
Most wretched being now beneath the cope
Of this affrighting gloom that wraps the world!—
I said I did not fear—Ah me! I feel
A shivering horror, run thro' all my powers!
O I am nought but tumult, fears and weakness!
And yet how idle fear, when hope is gone,
Gone, gone for ever!—O thou gentle scene

[Looking towards her bed.

Of sweet repose, where by th' oblivious draught
Of each sad toilsome day, to peace restor'd
Unhappy mortals lose their woes a while,
Thou hast no peace for me!—What shall I do?
How pass this dreadful night, so big with terror?—
Here, with the midnight shades, here will I sit,

[Sitting down.

A prey to dire despair, and ceaseless weep
The hours away—Bless me!—I heard a noise—

[Starting up.

No—I mistook—Nothing but silence reigns

And awful midnight round—Again!—O Heavens!
My Lord the King!

S C E N E VI.

TANCRED, SIGISMUNDA.

Tanc. Be not alarm'd, my love!

Sigif. My royal Lord! why at this midnight hour,
How came you hither?

Tanc. By that secret way
My love contriv'd, when we, in happier days,
Us'd to devote these hours, so much in vain,
To vows of love and everlasting friendship.

Sigif. Why will you thus persist to add new stings
To her distress, who never can be thine?
O fly me! fly! You know——

Tanc. I know too much.

O how I could reproach thee, Sigismunda!
Pour out my injur'd soul in just complaints!
But now the time permits not, these swift moments—
I told thee how thy father's artifice
Forc'd me to seem perfidious in thine eyes.
Ah, fatal blindness! not to have observ'd
The mingled pangs of rage and love that shook me;
When, by my cruel public situation
Compell'd, I only feign'd consent, to gain
A little time, and more secure thee mine.
E'er since—A dreadful interval of care!—
My thoughts have been employ'd, not without hope,
How to defeat Siffredi's barbarous purpose.
But thy credulity has ruin'd all,
Thy rash, thy wild—I know not what to name it—
Oh it has prov'd the giddy hopes of man
To be delusion all, and sickening folly!

Sigif. Ah, generous Tancred! ah thy truth destroys
me!

Yes, yes, 'tis I, 'tis I alone am false!
 My hasty rage, join'd to my tame submission,
 More than the most exalted filial duty
 Could e'er demand, has dain'd our cup of fate
 With bitterness unequall'd—But, alas!
 What are thy woes to mine?—to mine! just Heaven!—
 Now is thy turn of vengeance—hate, renounce me!
 O leave me to the fate I well deserve,
 To sink in hopeless misery!—at least,
 Try to forget the worthless Sigismunda!

Tanc. Forget thee! No! Thou art my soul itself
 I have no thought, no hope, no wish, but thee!
 Even this repented injury, the fears
 That rouse me all to madness, at the thought
 Of losing thee, the whole collected pains
 Of my full heart, serve but to make thee dearer!
 Ah, how forget thee!—Much must be forgot,
 Ere Tancred can forget his Sigismunda!

Sigisf. But you, my Lord, must make that great effort,

Tanc. Can Sigismunda make it?

Sigisf. Ah! I know not

With what success—But all that feeble woman,
 And love-entangled reason can perform,
 I, to the utmost, will exert to do it.

Tanc. Fear not—'Tis done!—If thou canst form
 the thought,

Success is sure—I am forgot already!

Sigisf. Ah, Tancred!—But, my Lord, respect me more;
 Think who I am—What can you now propose?

Tanc. To claim the plighted vows which Heaven
 has heard,

To vindicate the rights of holy love,
 By faith and honour bound, to which compar'd
 These empty forms, which have ensnar'd thy hand,
 Are impious guile, abuse, and profanation—
 Nay, as a king, whose high prerogative

By this unlicens'd marriage is affronted,
To bid the laws themselves pronounce it void.

Sigif. Honour, my Lord, is much too proud to catch
At every slender twig of nice distinctions.
These for th' unfeeling vulgar may do well ;
But those, whose souls are by the nicer rule
Of virtuous delicacy nobly sway'd,
Stand at another bar than that of laws.
Then cease to urge me—Since I am not born
To that exalted fate to be your queen——
Or, yet a dearer name—to be your wife !——
I am the wife of an illustrious lord
Of your own princely blood ; and what I am,
I will with proper dignity remain.
Retire, my royal Lord—There is no means
To cure the wounds this fatal day has given.
We meet no more !

Tanc. Oh barbarous Sigismunda !
And canst thou talk thus readily ? thus treat me
With such un pitying, unrelenting rigor ?
Poor is the love, that rather than give up
A little pride, a little formal pride,
The breath of vanity, can bear to see
The man, whose heart was once so dear to thine,
By many a tender vow so mix'd together,
A prey to anguish, fury and distraction !——
Thou canst not surely make me such a wretch,
Thou canst not, Sigismunda ! Yet relent,
O save us yet !—Rodolpho, with my guards,
Waits in the garden—Let us seize the moments
We ne'er may have again—With more than power
I will assert thee mine, with fairest honour.
The world shall even approve ; each honest bosom
Swell with a kindred joy to see us happy.

Sigif. The world approve !—What is the world to me ?
The conscious mind is its own awful world.——

And yet, perhaps, if thou wert not a king,
I know not, Tancred, what I might have done.
Then, then my conduct, sanctify'd by love,
Could not be deem'd, by the severest judge,
The mean effect of interest or ambition.
But now, not all my partial heart can plead,
Shall ever shake th' unalterable dictates
That tyrannize my breast.

Tanc. 'Tis well—No more——

I yield me to my fate—Yes, yes, inhuman!
Since thy barbarian heart is steel'd by pride,
Shut up to love and pity, here behold me
Cast on the ground, a vile and abject wretch!
Lost to all cares, all dignities, all duties!
Here will I grow, breathe out my faithful soul,
Here, at thy feet—Death, death alone shall part us!

Sigisf. Have you then vow'd to drive me to perdition?
What can I more?—Yes, Tancred! once again
I will forget the dignity my station
Commands me to sustain—for the last time
Will tell thee, that, I fear, no ties, no duty,
Can ever root thee from my hapless bosom.
O leave me! fly me! were it but in pity!——
To see what once we tenderly have lov'd,
Cut off from every hope—cut off for ever!
Is pain thy generosity should spare me.
Then rise, my Lord; and if you truly love me;
If you respect my honour, nay, my peace,
Retire! for tho' th' emotions of my heart
Can ne'er alarm my virtue; yet, alas!
They tear it so, they pierce it with such anguish—
Oh 'tis too much!—I cannot bear the conflict!

SCENE VII.

TANCRED, OSMOND, SIGISMUNDA.

Osmond. [entering] Turn, tyrant! turn! and answer
to my honour,

For this thy base unsufferable outrage!

Tanc. Insolent traitor! think not to escape

Thyself my vengeance! *[They fight. Osmond falls.]*

Sigisf. Help here! help!—O Heavens!

[Throwing herself down by him.]

Alas! my Lord, what meant your headlong rage?

That faith, which I, this day, upon the altar

To you devoted, is unblemish'd, pure,

As vestal truth; was resolutely yours,

Beyond the power of aught on earth to shake it.

Osmond. Perfidious woman! die!

[Shortening his sword, he plunges it into her breast.]

And to the grave

Attend a husband, yet but half aveng'd!

Tanc. O horror! horror! execrable villain!

Osmond. And, tyrant! thou!—Thou shalt not o'er
my tomb

Exult—'Tis well---'Tis great!--I die content.—

[Dies.]

SCENE VIII.

TANCRED, SIFFREDI, RODOLPHO, SIGISMUNDA,
LAURA.

Tanc. [Throwing himself down by Sigismunda.]

Quick! here! bring aid!—All in Palermo bring

Whose skill can save her!—Ah! that gentle bosom

Pours fast the streams of life.

Sigisf. All aid is vain,

I feel the powerful hand of death upon me—

But, oh! it sheds a sweetness thro' my fate,

That I am thine again; and, without blame,
May in my Tancred's arms resign my soul!

Tane. Oh, death is in that voice! so gently mild,
So sadly sweet, as mixes even with mine
The tears of hovering angels!—Mine again!—
And is it thus the cruel Fates have join'd us?
Are these the horrid nuptials they prepare
For love like ours? Is virtue thus rewarded?
Let not my impious rage accuse just Heaven!
Thou, Tancred! thou! hast murder'd Sigismunda!
That furious man was but the tool of fate,
I, I the cause!—But I will do thee justice
On this deaf heart! that to thy tender wisdom
Refus'd an ear—Yes, death shall soon unite us!

Sigif. Live, live, my Tancred!—Let my death
suffice

To expiate all that may have been amiss.
May it appease the Fates, avert their fury
From thy propitious reign! Meantime, of me
And of thy glory mindful, live, I charge thee,
To guard our friends; and make thy people happy—

[*Observing Siffredi fixed in astonishment and grief.*
My father!—Oh! how shall I lift my eyes
To thee, my sinking father!

Sif. Awful Heaven!

I am chastis'd!—My dearest child!—

Sigif. Where am I?

A fearful darkness closes all around—

My friends! we needs must part—I must obey
Th' imperious call—Farewel, my Laura! cherish
My poor afflicted father's age—Rodolpho,
Now is the time to watch th' unhappy king,
With all the care and tenderness of friendship—
Oh my dear father! bow'd beneath the weight
Of age and grief—the victim even of virtue,
Receive my last adieu!—Where art thou, Tancred?

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Give me thy hand—But ah! it cannot save me
From the dire king of terrors, whose cold power
Creeps o'er my heart—Oh!

Tanc. How these pangs distract me;
O lift thy gracious eyes!—Thou leav'st me then!
Thou leav'st me, Sigismunda!

Sigif. Yet a moment—
I had, my Tancred, something more to say—
Yes—but thy love and tenderness for me
Sure makes it needless—Harbour no resentment
Against my father; venerate his zeal,
That acted from a principle of goodness,
From faithful love to thee—Live and maintain
My innocence imbalm'd, with holiest care
Preserve my spotless memory!—I die—
Eternal Mercy take my trembling soul!
Oh! 'tis the only sting of death to part
From those we love—from thee—farewel, my Tan-
cred!

[*Exit.*]

Tanc. Thus then!

[*Flying to his sword, is held by Rodolphe.*]

Rod. Hold! hold! my Lord!—Have you forgot
Your Sigismunda's last request already?

Tanc. Off! set me free! Think not to bind me
down,
With barbarous friendship, to the rack of life!
What hand can shut the thousand thousand gates,
Which death still opens to the woes of mortals?
I shall find means—No power in earth or heaven
Can force me to endure the hateful sight,
Thus robb'd of all that lent it joy and sweetness!
Off! traitors! off! or my distracted soul
Will burst indignant from this jail of nature,
To where she beckons yonder—No, mild seraph!
Point not to life—I cannot linger here,

Cut off from thee, the miserable pity,
 The scorn of human kind!---A trampled king!
 Who let his mean poor-hearted love, one moment,
 To coward prudence stoop; who made it not
 The first undoubting action of his reign,
 To snatch thee to his throne, and there to shield thee,
 Thy helpless bosom from a ruffian's fury!--
 O shame! O agony! O the fell stings
 Of late, of vain repentance!--Ha! my brain
 Is all on fire! a wild abyss of thought!--
 Th' infernal world discloses! See! behold him!
 Lo! with fierce smiles he shakes the bloody steel,
 And mocks my feeble tears!----Hence! quickly!
 hence!

Spurn his vile carcase! give it to the dogs!
 Expose it to the winds and screaming ravens!
 Or hurl it down that fiery steep to hell,
 There with his soul to toils in flames for ever!--
 Ah, impotence of rage!--What am I?---Where?
 Sad, silent all?---The forms of dumb despair,
 Around some mournful tomb!--What do I see?
 This soft abode of innocence and love,
 Turn'd to the house of death! a place of horror!--
 Ah! that poor ~~corse!~~ pale! pale! deform'd with mur-
 Is that my Sigismunda! [der?

[Throwing himself down by her.

SIFFREDI.

[After a pathetic pause, looking on the scene
 before him.

Have I liv'd
 To these enfeebled years, by Heaven reserv'd
 To be a dreadful monument of justice?---
 Rodolpho, raise the King, and bear him hence
 From this distracting scene of blood and death.
 Alas! I dare not give him my assistance;
 My care would only more inflame his rage.

Behold the fatal work of my dark hand,
That by rude force the passions would-command,
That ruthless fought to root them from the breast;
They may be rul'd, but will not be oppress'd.
Taught hence, ye parents, who from nature stray,
And the great ties of social life betray;
Ne'er with your children act a tyrant's part:
'Tis yours to guide, not violate the heart.
Ye vainly wise, who o'er mankind preside,
Behold my righteous woes, and drop your pride!
Keep virtue's simple path before your eyes,
Nor think from evil good can ever rise.

The End of the Fifth Act.

EPILOGUE.

Spoken by Miss BUDGELL.

*GRAMM'D to the throat with wholesome moral stuff.
Alas ! poor audience ! you have had enough.
Was ever hapless heroine of a play
In such a piteous plight as ours to-day ?
Was ever woman so by love betray'd ?
Match'd with two husbands, and yet—die a maid.
But bless me !—bold—What sounds are these I hear !—
I see the tragic Muse herself appear.*

The back-scene opens, and discovers a romantic Sylvan landscape; from which Mrs Cibber, in the character of the tragic Muse, advances slowly to music, and speaks the following lines.

*Hence with your slipshod Epilogue, that tries
To wipe the virtuous tear from British eyes ;
That dares my moral, tragic scene profane,
With strains—at best, unsuited, light and vain.
Hence from the pure unsully'd beams that play
In yon fair eyes where virtue shines—Away !*

*Britons, to you from chaste Castalian groves,
Where dwell the tender, oft unhappy loves ;
Where shades of heroes roam, each mighty name,
And court my aid to rise again to fame ;
To you I come, to freedom's noblest seat,
And in Britannia fix my last retreat.*

*In Greece and Rome, I watch'd the public weal ;
The purple tyrant trembled at my steel :
Nor did I less o'er private sorrows reign,
And mend the melting heart with softer pain.
On France and You then rose my bright'ning star,
With social ray—The Arts are ne'er at war.*

EPILOGUE.

*O as your fire and genius stronger blaze,
As yours are generous freedom's bolder lays,
Let not the Gallic taste leave yours behind,
In decent manners and in life refin'd ;
Banish the motley mode, to tag low verse,
The laughing ballad to the mournful verse.
When thro' five acts your hearts have learn'd to glow,
Touch'd with the sacred force of honest woe ;
O keep the dear impression on your breast,
Nor idly lose it for a wretched jest.*

C O R I O L A N U S :

A

T R A G E D Y.

VOL. IV.

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P R O L O G U E.

Written by the Hon. GEORGE LITTLETON, Esq;

Spoken by Mr QUIN.

I COME not here your candour to implore
 For scenes, whose author is, alas! no more;
 He wants no advocate his cause to plead;
 You will yourselves be patrons of the dead.
 No party his benevolence confin'd,
 No sect—alike it flow'd to all mankind.
 He lov'd his friends (forgive this gushing tear:
 Alas! I feel I am no actor here.)
 He lov'd his friends with such a warmth of heart,
 So clear of int'rest, so devoid of art,
 Such generous freedom, such unshaken zeal,
 No words can speak it, but our tears may tell.—
 O candid truth! O faith without a stain!
 O manners gently firm, and nobly plain!
 O sympathizing love of others bliss!
 Where will you find another breast like his?
 Such was the man—the poet well you know:
 Oft has he touch'd your hearts with tender woe:
 Oft in this crowded house, with just applause
 You heard him teach fair virtue's purest laws:
 For his chaste muse employ'd her heaven-taught lyre
 None but the noblest passions to inspire,
 Not one immoral, one corrupted thought,
 One line, which dying he could wish to blot.
 Oh, may to-night your favourable doom
 Another laurel add to grace his tomb;
 Whilst he, superior now to praise or blame,
 Hears not the feeble voice of human fame.
 Yet if to those whom most on earth he lov'd,
 From whom his pious care is now remov'd,
 With whom his liberal hand, and bounteous heart,
 Shav'd all his little fortune could impart;
 If to those friends your kind regard shall give
 What they no longer can from him receive,
 That, that, even now, above yon starry pole,
 May touch with pleasure his immortal soul.

The PERSONS.

- CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS, Mr Quin.
- ATTIUS TULLUS, General of the }
Volscian army, Mr Ryan.
- GALESUS, one of the deputies of }
the *Volscian* states attending the camp, Mr Delane.
- The other deputies of the *Volscian* }
states.
- VOLUSIUS, one of the principal }
Volscian officers, Mr Sparks.
- TITUS, freed-man of GALESUS, Mr Ridout.
- MARCUS MINUCIUS, Consul and }
principal of the deputation from Rome to CORIOLANUS, Mr Bridgwater.
- POSTHUMUS COMINIUS, a Con- }
sular Senator, one of the deputation, and who had been the Roman General at the taking of Corioli, Mr Anderson.
- VETURIA, mother of CORIOLANUS, Mrs Woffington.
- VOLUMNIA, wife of CORIOLANUS, Miss Bellamy.
- Roman Senators, Priests, Augurs, &c. of the first deputation. Roman Ladies, in the train of VETURIA and VOLUMNIA, of the second deputation.
- Volscian* OFFICERS, LICTORS, SOLDIERS, &c.

SCENE, the *Volscian* Camp.

C O R I O L A N U S :

T R A G E D Y.

A C T I. S C E N E L.

The Volscian Camp.

ATTIUS TULLUS, VOLUSIUS.

VOLUSIUS.

WHENCE is it, Tullus, that our arms are
stopp'd

Here on the borders of the Roman state?

Why sleeps that spirit, whose heroic ardor

Urg'd you to break the truce, and pour'd our host,

From all th' united cantons of the Volsci,

On their unguarded frontier? Such designs

Brook not an hour's delay; their whole success

Depends on instant vigorous execution.

Tul. Volusius, I approve thy brave impatience;

And will to thee, in confidence of friendship,

Disclose my secret soul. Thou know'st Galesus,

Whose freedom Caius Marcius, once his guest,

Of all the spoil of sack'd Corioli,

Alone demanded; and who thence to Rome,

From gratitude and friendship, follow'd Marcius ;
Whence lately to our Antium he return'd,
With overtures of peace propos'd by Rome.

Vol. I know him well : an antiquated sage
Of that romantic school Pythagoras
Establish'd here on our Hesperian shore ;
Whose gentle dictates only serve to tame
Enfeebled mortals into slaves.

Tul. Galesus,
Doubtless, possesses many civil virtues ;
Is gentle, good ; for rectitude of heart,
And innocence of life, by all rever'd.

Vol. Pardon me, Tullus, if my faithful bluntness
Deems you too lib'ral in his praise. In peace
Such may perhaps do well, when prating rules
An idle world ; but in tempestuous times
They are stark naught, these visionary statesmen,
Fit rulers only for their golden age.
The rugged genius of rapacious Rome
For other men, and other counsels, calls.

Tul. Your thoughts are mine—I only meant to
tell thee
The part he bears in this ill-tim'd delay.

Soon as our gather'd army march'd from Antium,
The Roman senate, whose attentive caution
Watch'd all our motions, took at once th' alarm ;
And sent a herald, ere we past their borders,
With formal ceremony, to demand
The cause of our approach. — Had I been master,
I would have answer'd at the gates of Rome.
But this Galesus, who attends our camp,
Among the Volscian deputies, so pleaded .
The laws of nations, made such loud complaints
Against th' infraction of the public faith,
So teaz'd us with the pedantry of states,
That I was forc'd, unwilling, to permit
His freedman Titus, to be sent to Rome

With our demands. If these the senate grants,
We then are in the toils of peace entangled,
In spite of all my efforts to avoid them.

Vol. O 'tis a wild chimera! Peace with Rome?
Dream not of that, unless the Volscian courage
Is quite subdu'd, and only seeks to gild
A vile submission with that specious name.
Learn wisdom from your neighbours. Peace with
Rome

Has quell'd the Latines, tam'd their freeborn spirit,
And by her friendship honoured them with chains.

Tul. She ne'er will grant it on the just conditions
I now have brought the Volsci to demand:
The restitution of our conquer'd cities,
And fair alliance upon equal terms.
I know the Roman insolence will scorn
To yield to this; and Titus must return
Within three days the longest term allowed him;
Of which the third is near elaps'd already.
Then even Galesus will not dare to stop us
With superstitious forms, and solemn trifles,
From letting loose th' unbridled rage of war
Against those hated tyrants of Hesperia.

Vol. Thanks to the Gods! my sword will then be
free,

Then, poor Corioli! thy bleeding wounds,
Thy treasures sack'd, thy captivated matrons,
Shall amply be reveng'd by thy Volusius;
Then, Tullus, from the lofty brows of Marcius
Thou may'st regain the wreaths his conquering hand,
By partial fortune aided, tore from thine.

Tul. O my Volusius! thou, who art a soldier,
A try'd and brave one too, say, in thy heart
Dost thou not scorn me? thou, who saw'st me bend
Beneath the half-spent thunder of a foe,
Warm from the conquest of Corioli,

Which, rushing furious in with those whose sally
 He had repell'd, he seiz'd almost alone ;
 And gave to fire and sword. Yet thence he flew,
 Scorning the plunder of our richest city,
 His wounds undrest, without a moment's respite,
 To where our armies on the fearful edge
 Of battle stood ; and asking of the consul
 To be oppos'd to me, with mighty rage,
 Resistless, bore us down.

Vol. True valour, Tullus,
 Lyes in the mind, the never-yielding purpose,
 Nor owns the blind award of giddy fortune.

Tul. My soul, my friend, my soul is all on fire!
 Thirst of revenge consumes me ! the revenge
 Of generous emulation, not of hatred.
 This happy Roman, this proud Marcius, haunts me.
 Each troubled night, when slaves and captives sleep,
 Forgetful of their chains, I, in my dreams,
 Anew am vanquish'd ; and beneath the sword
 With horror sinking, feel a tenfold death,
 The death of honour. But I will redeem—
 Yes, Marcius, I will yet redeem my fame.
 To face thee once again is the great purpose,
 For which alone I live.—Till then how slow,
 How tedious lags the time ! while shame corrodes me,
 With many a bitter thought ; and injur'd honour
 Sick, and desponding preys upon itself.

Vol. It fast approaches now, the hour of vengeance,
 To this famed land, to antient Latium due.
 Unbalanc'd Rome, at variance with herself,
 To order lost, in deep and hot commotion,
 Stands on the dangerous point of civil war ;
 Her haughty nobles and seditious commons
 Reviling, fearing, hating one another :
 While, on our part all wears a prosperous face ;
 Our troops united, numerous, high in spirit,

As if their general's soul inform'd them all.
O long-expected day!

Tul. Go, brave Volufius,
Go breathe thy ardor into every breast;
That when the Volscian envoy shall return,
Whom ere the close of evening I expect,
One spirit may unite us in the cause
Of generous freedom, and our native rights,
So long oppress'd by Rome's encroaching power.

S C E N E II.

TULLUS alone.

Galeus said that Marcius stands for Consul.
O favour thou his suit, propitious Jove!
That I may brave him at his army's head,
In all the majesty of sovereign power!
That the whole conduct of the war may rest
On us alone, and prove by its decision,
Which of the two is worthiest to command. —

S C E N E III.

TULLUS, Officer.

Tul. Ha! why this haste? you look alarm'd.

Off. My Lord,

One of exalted port, his visage hid,
Has plac'd himself upon your sacred hearth,
Beneath the dread protection of your Lares;
And sits majestic there in solemn silence.

Tul. Did you not ask him who, and what he was?

Off. My Lord, I could not speak; I felt appall'd,
As if the presence of some God had struck me.

Tul. Come, dastard! let me find this man of ter-
rors.

SCENE IV.

The back-scene opens, and discovers Coriolanus as described above.

CORIOLANUS, TULLUS.

Tul. [after some silence] Illustrious stranger—for thy high demeanour

Bespeaks thee such—who art thou?

Cor. [Rising and unmuffling his face.] View me, Tullus—— [After some pause,

Dost thou not know me?

Tul. No; that noble front

I never saw before. What is thy name?

Cor. Does not the secret voice of hostile instinct, Does not thy swelling heart declare me to thee?

Tul. Gods! can it be?—

Cor. Yes; I am Caius Marcius;

Known to thy smarting country by the name

Of Coriolanus. That alone is left me,

That empty name, for all my toils, my service,

The blood which I have shed for thankless Rome.

Behold me banish'd thence, a victim yielded

By her weak nobles to the maddening rabble.

I seek revenge. Thou may'st employ my sword,

With keener edge, with heavier force against her,

Than e'er it fell upon the Volscian nation.

But if thou, Tullus, dost refuse me this,

The only wish of my collected heart,

Where every passion in one burning point

Concenters, give me death: Death from thy hand

I sure have well deserv'd—Nor shall I blush

To take or life or death from Attius Tullus.

Tul. O Caius Marcius! in this one short moment, That we have friendly talk'd, my ravish'd heart Has undergone a great, a wondrous change.

I ever held thee in my best esteem;
But this heroic confidence has won me,
Stamp't me at once thy friend. I were indeed
A wretch as mean as this thy trust is noble,
Could I refuse thee thy demand—Yes, Marcius!
Thou hast thy wish! take half of my command.
If that be not enough, then take the whole.
We have, my friend, a gallant force on foot,
An army, Marcius, fit to follow thee.
Go, lead them on, and take thy full revenge.
All should unite to punish the ungrateful.
Ingratitude is treason to mankind.

Cor. [embracing him.] Thus, generous Tullus, take
a soldier's thanks,

Who is not practis'd in the gloss of words——
Thou friend indeed! friend to my cause, my quarrel!
Friend to the darling passion of my soul!
All else I set at nought!——Immortal Gods!
I am new-made, and wonder at myself!
A little while ago, and I was nothing;
A powerless reptile crawling on the earth,
Curs'd with a soul that restless wish'd to wield
The bolts of Jove! I dwelt in Erebus,
I wander'd through the hopeless gloom of hell,
Stung with revenge, tormented by the furies!
Now, Tullus, like a god, you draw me thence,
Throne me amidst the skies, with tempest charg'd,
And put the ready thunder in my hand!

Tul. What I have promis'd, Marcius, I will do.
Within an hour at farthest we expect
The freedman of Galesus back from Rome,
Who carry'd to the senate our demands.
Their answer will, I doubt not, end the truce,
And instant draw our angry swords against them.
Till then retire within my inmost tent,
Unknown to all but me, that when our chiefs

Meet in full council to declare for war,
I may produce thee to their wondering eyes,
As if descended from avenging Heaven
To humble lofty Rome, and teach her justice.

Cor. To thy direction, Tullus, I resign
My future life ; my fate is in thy hands ;
And, if I judge aright, the fate of Rome.

The End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

GALESUS, TITUS.

GALESUS.

INDEED! my Titus, I had hopes that Rome,
Vex'd as she is with her domestic broils,
Her frontier weak, her armies unprepar'd,
Might have comply'd with our demands, and given us
The same alliance granted to the Latines.

Tit. The Senate scarce would hear the terms I
offer'd;

But order'd me to bring this answer back:

“If first the Volsci take up arms, the Romans

“Will be the last to lay them down.”

Gal. Alas!

This answer seals the doom of many a wretch.

Unchain'd Bellona from her temple rushes,

With all the crimes and vices in her train.

Earth fades at her approach. To rural peace,

Fair plenty, and the social joy of cities,

Soon will succeed rage, rapine, devastation,

Each cruel horror sanctify'd by names.

O mortals! mortals! when will you, content

With Nature's bounty, that in fuller flow,

Still as your labours open more its sources,

Abundant gushes o'er the happy world;

When will you banish violence and outrage,

To dwell with beasts of prey in woods and desarts?

Tit. Never till Rome shall change her conquering
maxims.

Gal. Her haughty spirit now will soar beyond
Its usual pitch, upborne by Caius Marcius,
Stands he not for the Consulate?

Tit. He did.

But is no more a citizen of Rome.

Gal. What mean'st thou, Titus?

Tit. Marcius is from Rome

Banish'd for ever.

Gal. O immortal powers!

On what pretence could they to exile doom

Their wisest captain, and their bravest soldier?

Nor less renown'd for piety, for justice,

An uncorrupted heart, and purest manners.

Tit. The charge against him was entirely ground-
less,

What not his enemies themselves believ'd,

Affecting of tyrannic power in Rome.

His real crime was only some hot words,

Struck from his fiery temper in the Senate,

Against those factious ministers of discord,

The tribunes of the people. They to rage,

And frantic fury, rous'd the mad plebeians;

By whom supported in their bold attempt,

They durst presume to summon to the bar

Of an enrag'd and partial populace,

The most illustrious senator of Rome.

To this the nobles yielded—and with his,

Gave up their own and children's rights for ever.

Gal. O shameful weakness in a Roman senate,

So much renown'd for firmness! yet, my Titus,

Spite of my love to Marcius, I must own it,

The vigorous soil whence his heroic virtues

Luxuriant rise, if not with careful hand

Severely weeded, teems with imperfections.

His lofty spirit brooks no opposition.

His rage, if once offended, knows no bounds.

He deems plebeians, with patrician blood

Compar'd, the creatures of a lower species,

Mere menial hands by Nature made to serve him.

Tit. It was this high patrician pride undid him.
The furious people triumph'd in his ruin,
As if they had expell'd another Tarquin :
While, like a captive train, the vanquish'd nobles
Hung their dejected heads in silent shame.
Marcius alone seem'd unconcern'd ; though deep
The latent tempest boil'd within his breast,
Choak'd up and smother'd with excessive rage.

Gal. You were his guest at Rome, and therefore,
Titus,

Might on this sad condition be permitted
To join your tears with his domestic friends.
Saw you that moving scene ?

Tit. I did, *Galeus*.

I follow'd Marcius home—His mother, there,
Veturia, the most venerable matron
These eyes have e'er beheld, and soft *Volumnia*,
His lovely virtuous wife, amidst his children,
Spread on the ground, lay lost in dumb despair.
He swelling stood a while, and could not speak,
Th' affronted hero struggling with the man ;
Then thus at last he broke the gloomy silence ;
“ 'Tis done. The guilty sentence is pronounc'd.
“ Ungrateful Rome has cast me from her bosom.
“ Support this blow with fortitude and courage,
“ As it becomes two generous Roman matrons.
“ I recommend my children to your care.
“ Farewel. I go, I quit, without regret,
“ A city grown an enemy to virtue.”

Gal. Oh, Godlike Marcius ! Oh, unconquer'd
strength

And dignity of mind ! how much superior
Is such a soul to all the power of fortune !

Tit. This said, he sternly try'd to break away :
When holding in his hand his eldest son,
Veturia follow'd ; whilst the poor *Volumnia*,

All drown'd in tears, and bearing in one arm
 Their youngest, yet an infant, with the other
 Hung clinging at his knees—he, turning to them,
 Half soften'd, half severe, breath'd from his soul
 These broken accents—"Cease your vain complaints,
 "Mother, you have no more a son; and thou,
 "Thou best of women! thou, my dear Volumnia!
 "No more a husband."—Pierc'd with these dire
 words

Volumnia lifeless sunk; and off he flung,
 With wild precipitation.

Gal. Thy sad tale

Blinds my old eyes with tears—But whither, tell me,
 O whither, Titus, bent he then his course?

Tit. Where the blind genius of regardless rage
 And desperation led. On to the gate,
 Capena call'd, attended by the nobles,
 He stalk'd in sullen majesty along;
 Nor deign'd a word. A godlike virtuous anger
 Beam'd thro' his features, and sublimed his air.
 With down-cast eyes he walk'd; or, if aside
 He chanc'd to look, each look was great reproach.
 Thus in emphatic silence, that made words
 Void and insipid all, he parted from them,
 The day preceding my return from Rome;
 Nor has been heard of since, lost in th' abyss
 Of his own woes.

Gal. O Marcius, noble Marcius!

How shall my friendship succour thy distress?
 Where shall I find thee to partake thy sorrows,
 And make myself companion of thy exile?

But, Titus, we indulge discourse too long—
 Go, and assemble thou the Volsian chiefs,
 Whilst I repair to Tullus, to inform,
 And bring him to the council, there to hear
 The fatal answer thou hast brought from Rome.

S C E N E II.

Changes to Tullus's Tent.

CORIOLANUS, TULLUS.

Cor. Forgive me, Tullus, if I count the moments
That stop the purpose of thy noble kindness,
And keep me here confin'd in tame inaction.
Why lingers Titus?

Tul. Calm thy restless heart,
Brave Marcius; every minute I expect him.
Soon from the cloud that hides thee shalt thou break
With double brightness; soon thy fiery rage
Shall wither all the strength and pride of Rome.

Cor. O righteous Jove, protector of the injur'd!
If from my earliest youth, with pious awe,
I still have reverenc'd thy all-powerful justice,
Still by her sacred dictates rul'd my actions;
O let thy justice now support my cause,
And arm my strong right-hand with all her terrors!
When that is done, be life or death my lot,
As thy almighty pleasure shall determine.

[Enter an Officer to Tullus.]

Off. My Lord, 'Galesus asks admittance to you.

Tul. Marcius, retire an instant, till I hear
The business brings him hither—Bid him enter.

[Exit Officer and Coriolanus.]

S C E N E III.

TULLUS, GALESUS.

Gal. Tullus, the Roman Senate has return'd
No other answer to our late demands,
But absolute denial and defiance.

Tul. It is what I expected—We shall teach them

An humbler language soon--Hast thou assembled,
As I desir'd, the Volscian chiefs in council?

Gal. Titus is gone to summon their attendance.

Tul. It is enough—Come forth, my noble guest!
And shew Galesus how the Gods assist us.

S C E N E IV.

CORIOLANUS, TULLUS, GALESUS.

Gal. O my astonish'd soul! what do I see?
What! Caius Marcius! Caius Marcius here,
Beneath one tent with Tullus?

Tul. Ay, and more.

With Tullus, now his friend and fellow-soldier.
Yes, thou shalt see him thundering at the head
Of Volscian armies; he who oft has carried
Destruction through their ranks—Your leave a mo-
ment,

While to our chiefs and fathers I announce
Their unexpected guest.

S C E N E V.

CORIOLANUS, GALESUS.

Cor. Thou good old man!

Close let me strain thee to my faithful heart,
Which now is doubly thine, united more
By the protection which thy country gives me,
Than by our former friendship.

Gal. Strange event!

This is thy work, Almighty Providence!
Whose power, beyond the stretch of human thought,
Revolves the orbs of empire; bids them sink
Deep in the dead'ning night of thy displeasure,
Or rise majestic o'er a wondering world.

The Gods by thee—I see it, Coriolanus—
Mean to exalt us and depress the Romans.

Cor. Galesus, yes, the Gods have sent me hither ;
Those righteous Gods, who, when vindictive justice
Excites them to destroy a worthless people,
Make their own crimes and follies strike the blow.

Gal. Cherish these thoughts, that teach us what we
are,

And tame the pride of man. There is a power,
Unseen, that rules th' illimitable world,
That guides its motions, from the brightest star,
To the least dust of this sin-tainted mould ;
While man, who madly deems himself the Lord
Of all, is nought but weakness and dependance.
This sacred truth, by sure experience taught,
Thou must have learn'd, when, wandering all alone,
Each bird, each insect, flitting thro' the sky,
Was more sufficient for itself, than thou——
Ah the full image of thy woes dissolves me !
The pangs that must have torn, at parting from thee,
Thy mother and thy wife. I cannot think
Of that sad scene without some drops of pity !

Cor. Who was it forc'd me to that bitter parting ?
Who, in one cruel, hasty moment, chas'd me
From wife, from children, friends, and household Gods,
Me ! who so often had protected theirs ?
Who, from the sacred city of my fathers,
Drove me with nature's commoners to dwell,
To lodge beneath their wide unshelter'd roof,
And at their table feed ? O blast me, Gods !
With every woe ! debility of mind,
Dishonour, just contempt, and palsy'd weakness,
If I forgive the villains ! yes, Galesus,
Yes, I will offer to the powers of vengeance
A great, a glorious victim—a whole city !——
Why, Tullus, this delay ?

Gal. May Coriolanus

Be to the Volscian nation, and himself,
The dread, the godlike instrument of justice !
But let not rage and vengeance mix their rancour ;
Let them not trouble with their fretful storm,
Their angry gleams, that azure, where enthron'd
The calm divinity of justice sits,
And pities, while she punishes, mankind.

Cor. What saidst thou ? What, against the powers
of vengeance ?

The Gods gave honest anger, just revenge,
To be the awful guardians of the rights
And native dignity of human kind.
O were it not for them, the saucy world
Would grow a noisome nest of little tyrants !
Each carrion crow, on eagle merit perch'd,
Would peck his eyes out, and the mungrel cur
At pleasure bait the lion—No, Galesus,
I would not rashly, nor on light occasion,
Receive the deep impression in my breast ;
But when the base, the brutal and unjust,
Or, worse than all, th' ungrateful, stamp it there ;
Oh I will then with luxury supreme
Enjoy the pleasure of offended Gods,
A righteous, just revenge !—Behold my soul.

[*Enter an Officer.*

Off. My Lords, th' assembled chiefs desire your presence.

Gal. Come, noble Marcius ; let my joyful hand
Conduct thee thither—Doubt not thy reception
Will be proportion'd to thy fame and merit.

S C E N E VI.

The back-scene opens, and discovers the Deputies of the Volscian States, assembled in council. They rise and salute Coriolanus; then resume their places.

GALESUS, TULLUS, CORIOLANUS, Senators.

Gals. Assembled States, and captains of the Volsci,
Behold the chief so much renown'd in war;
Our once so formidable foe, but now
Our proffer'd friend and soldier—Caius Marcius.

1 Sen. We give him hearty welcome from our souls.

Cor. Most noble chiefs, and fathers of the Volsci,
I need not say, how by the people's rage,
And the poor weakness of the timid nobles,
I am expell'd from Rome. Had I confin'd
My wishes merely to a safe retreat,
Some Latine city might have given me that;
Or any nameless corner. What imports it,
Where a tame patient exile rots in silence?
But, Volscian Lords, permit me to declare,
I would at once cut short my useless days,
Rather than be that despicable wretch,
Who neither can take vengeance on his foes,
Nor serve his friends. That is my temper, chiefs.
I shall be glad to merit, by my sword,
Th' asylum which I seek among the Volsci.
Rome is our common foe: then let us join
Our common sufferings, passions, and resentments.
Yes, tho' but one, I bring so many wrongs,
So large a share of powerful enmity,
Into the war, as gives me the presumption,
To offer to the Volscian States th' alliance
Even of my single arm.—

Tul. That single arm

Is in itself a numerous army, Marcius ;
The Volscians so esteem it—But proceed.

Cor. I will not mention, Volscian chiefs, what talent
The world allows me to possess in war :
But be that what it will, you may employ it.
Soldier, or captain, in whatever station
You place me, I will lose each drop of blood,
Or with this hand I'll fix the Volscian standard
On the proud towers of capitolian Jove.

Tul. Chiefs of the Volscian league, I give you joy
Of our new citizen, the noble Marcius.
The genius of the Volscian State has sent him,
Whetted by wrongs into a keener hatred
Than that we bear to Rome. It were contemning,
With impious self-sufficient arrogance,
This bounty of the Gods, not to accept,
With every mark of honour, of his service.
I, Volscians, I, even Attius Tullus, give,
First of you all, my voice, that Caius Marcius
Be now receiv'd to high command among us ;
That instantly we do appoint him general
Of half our troops, which here, with your consent,
I to him yield.—Speak, chiefs, is this your pleasure ?

Sen. It is—We give unanimous consent.

Tul. [*embracing him.*] Marcius, I joy to call thee
my companion,

And colleague in this war.

Cor. By all the Gods !

Thou art the generous victor of my soul !
Yes, Tullus, I am conquer'd by thy virtue.

Gal. Tho' I have oft, on great occasions, Tullus,
Beheld thee in the senate, and the field,
Cover'd with glory ; yet, I must avow,
I never saw thee shew such genuine greatness,
Such true sublimity of soul, as now.

To scorn th' all-powerful charm of selfish passions,

Chiefly the dazzling pride of emulation,
That noble weakness of heroic minds,
To sink thyself that thou may'st raise thy country ;
To put the sword into thy rival's hand,
And twine thy promis'd laurels round his brow——
O 'tis a flight beyond the highest point
Of martial glory ! and what few can reach.
Go forth, ye chosen ministers of justice ;
And may that awful power, whose secret hand
Sways all our passions, turns our partial views
All to its own dread purposes, attend you !

Cor. I burn to enter on the glorious task
You now have mark'd me out. How slow the time
To the warm soul, that in the very instant
It forms, would execute, a great design.
'Tis my advice we march direct to Rome ;
We cannot be too quick. Let the first dawn
See us in bright array before her walls.
Perhaps when they behold their exile there,
Back'd by your force, some conscious hearts among
 them

May feel th' alarm of guilt.

Tul. I much approve
Of this advice. 'Tis what I thought before,
Ere strengthen'd, Marcius, by thy mighty arm :
But now 'tis doubly right. Here, Volscian chiefs,
Here let our counsel terminate—The troops
Have had repose sufficient. Strait to Rome,
Come, let us urge our march—As yet the stars
Ride in their middle watch : we shall, with ease,
Reach it by dawn.——

Cor. Yes, we have time—too much !
Six tedious hours till morn—But hence ! away !
My soul on fire anticipates the dawn.

The End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

CORIO LANUS, TULLUS, VOLUSIUS, TITUS, *with a crowd of Volscian Officers. Acclamations behind the scenes.*

CORIO LANUS.

NO more—I merit not this lavish praise.

True, we have driven the Roman legions back,
Defeated, and disgrac'd—But what is this?

Nothing, ye Volsci, nothing yet is done.

We but begin the wond'rous leaf of story,
That marks the Roman doom. At length it dawns,
The destin'd hour, that eases of their fears
The nations round, and sets Hesperia free.

Come on, my brave companions of the war!

Come, let us finish at one mighty stroke

This toil of labouring fate—We will, or perish!

While, noble Tullus, you protect the camp,
I, with my troops, all men of chosen valour,
And well-approv'd to-day, will storm the city.

Tit. Beneath thy animating conduct, Marcius,
What can the Volscian valour not perform?
Thy very sight and voice subdues the Romans.
When, lifting up your helm, you shew'd your face,
That like a comet glar'd destruction on them,
I saw their bravest veterans fly before thee.

Their ancient spirit has with thee forsook them,
And rain hangs o'er yon devoted walls.

[*Enter an Officer, who addresses himself to Coriolanus.*]

Off. My Lord, a herald is arriv'd from Rome,
To lay, a députation from the Senate,
Attended by the ministers of Heaven,
A venerable train of priests and flamens,
Is on the way, address'd to you.

Cor. To me !

What can this message mean !—Stand to your arms,
Ye Volscian troops ; and let these Romans pass
Betwixt the lowering frown of double files.
What ! do they think me such a milky boy,
To pay my vengeance with a few soft words.
Come, fellow-foldiers, Tullus, come and see,
If I betray the honours you have done me.

[Goes out with a train of Volscian Officers.]

S C E N E II.

TULLUS, VOLUSIUS, *who remain.*

Vol. *[after some silence.]* Are we not, Tullus, failing in our duty

Not to attend our general ?

Tul. How ! what saidst thou ?

Vol. Methought, my Lord, his parting orders were,
We should attend the triumph now preparing
O'er all his foes at once—Romans and Volsci !
Come, we shall give offence.

Tul. Of this no more.

I pray thee spare thy bitter irony.

Vol. Shall I then speak without disguise ?

Tul. Speak out,

With all the honest bluntness of a friend.

Think'st thou I fear the truth ?

Vol. Then, Tullus, know,

Thou art no more the General of the Volsci.
Thou hast, by this thy generous weakness, sunk
Thyself into a private man of Antium.
Yes, thou hast taken from thy laurel'd brow
The well-earn'd trophies of thy toils and perils,
Thy springing hopes, the fairest ever budded,
And heap'd them on a man too proud before.

Tul. He bears it high.

Vol. Death and perdition ! high !
With uncontroul'd command !—You see, already,
He will not be encumber'd with the fetters
Of our advice. He speaks his sovereign will ;
On every hand he issues out his orders,
As to his natural slaves.—For you, my Lord,
He has, I think, confin'd you to your camp,
There in inglorious indolence to languish ;
While he, beneath your blasted eye, shall reap
The harvest of your honour.

Tul. No, Volusius,
Whatever honour shall by him be gain'd
Reverts to me, from whose superior bounty
He drew the means of all his glorious deeds.
This mighty chief, this conqueror of Rome,
Is but my creature.——

Vol. Wretched self-delusion ;
He and the Volscians know he is thy master.
He acts as such in all things—Now, by Mars,
Could my abhorrent soul endure the thought
Of stooping to a Roman chief, I here
Would leave thee in thy solitary camp,
And go where glory calls.

Tul. Indeed, Volusius,
I did expect more equal treatment from him.
But what of that ?—The generous pride of virtue
Disdains to weigh too nicely the returns
Her bounty meets with—Like the liberal Gods,
From her own gracious nature she bestows,
Nor stoops to ask reward—Yet must I own,
I thought he would not have so soon forgot
What he so lately was, and what I am.

Vol. Gods ! knew ye not his character before ?
Did you not know his genius was to yours
Averse, as are antipathies in nature ?
High, over-weening, tyrannously proud,

And only fit to hold command o'er slaves ?
 Hence, as repugnant to that equal life,
 Which is the quickening soul of all republics,
 The Roman people cast him forth ; and we,
 Shall we receive the bane of their repose,
 Into our breast ? Are we less free than they ?
 Or shall we be more patient of a tyrant ?

Tul. All this I know. But while his imperfections
 Are thy glad theme, thou hast forgot his virtues.

Vol. I leave that subject to the smooth Galesus,
 And these his Volscian flatterers---His virtues !
 Trust me there is no insolence that treads
 So high as that which rears itself on virtue.

Tul. Well, be it so---I meant, that even his vices
 Should, on this great occasion, serve the Volsci.

Vol. Confusion ! there it is ! there lurks the sting
 Of our dishonour ! while this Marcius leads
 The Roman armies, ours are driven before him.
 Behold, he changes sides ; when with him changes
 The fortune of the war. Strait they grow Volsci,
 And we victorious Romans---Such, no doubt,
 Such is his secret boast---Ay, this vile brand
 Success itself will fix for ever on us ;
 And, Tullus, thou, 'tis thou must answer for it.

Tul. [*Aside.*] His words are daggers to my heart ;
 I feel

Their truth, but am ashamed to own my folly.

Vol. O shame ! O infamy ! the thought consumes
 It scalds my eyes with tears, to see a Roman [me,
 Borne on our shoulders to immortal fame :
 Just in the happy moment that decided
 The long dispute of ages, that for which
 Our generous ancestors had toil'd and bled,
 To see him then step in and steal our glory !
 O that we first had perish'd all ! A people,

Who cannot find in their own proper force
Their own protection, are not worth the saving!

Tul. It must have way! I will no more suppress it—

Know then, my rough old friend, no less than thee
His conduct hurts me and upbraids my folly.

I wake as from a dream. What demon mov'd me?

What doating generosity? his woes,

Was it his woes? to see the brave reduc'd

To trust his mortal foe? perhaps, a little

That work'd within my bosom—But, Volufius,

That was not all—I will to thee confess

The weakness of my heart—Yes, it was pride,

The dazzling pride to see my rival warrior,

The great Coriolanus, bend his soul,

His haughty soul, to sue for my protection.

Protection, said I? were it that alone,

I had been base to have refus'd him that,

To have refus'd him aught a gallant foe

Owes to a gallant foe.—But to exalt him

To the same level, nay, above myself;

To yield him the command of half my troops,

The choicest acting half—That, that was madness!

Was weak, was mean, unworthy of a man!

Vol. I scorn to flatter thee——It was indeed,

Tul. Curse on the slave Galeus! soothing, he

Seiz'd the fond moment of infatuation,

And clinch'd the chains my generous folly forg'd.

How shall I from this labyrinth escape?

Must it then be! what cruel genius dooms me,

In war or peace, to creep beneath his fortune?

Vol. That genius is thyself. If thou canst bear

The very thought of stooping to this Roman,

Thou from that moment art his vassal, Tullus;

By that thou dost acknowledge, parent nature

Has form'd him thy superior. But if fix'd

Upon the base of manly resolution,

Thou say'st—I will be free! I will command!
I and my country! then—O never doubt it—
We shall find means to crush this vain intruder;
Even I myself—this hand——
Nay, hear me, Tullus,

'Tis not yet come to that, that last resource.
I do not say we should employ the dagger,
While other, better means are in our power.

Tul. No, my Volusius, fortune will not drive us,
Or I am much deceiv'd, to that extreme:
We shall not want the strongest fairest plea,
To give a solemn sanction to his fate.
He will betray himself. Whate'er his rage
Of passion talks, a weakness for his country
Sticks in his soul, and he is still a Roman.
Soon shall we see him tempted to the brink
Of this sure precipice—Then down, at once,
Without remorse, we hurl him to perdition!

But hark! the trumpet calls us to a scene
I should detest, if not from hope we thence
May gather matter to mature our purpose.

S C E N E III.

The back-scene opens, and discovers Coriolanus sitting on his tribunal attended by his lictors, and a croud of Volscian Officers. Files of troops drawn up on either hand. In the depth of the scene appear the Deputies from the Roman Senate, M. Minucius, Polthumus Cominius, Sp. Lartius, P. Pinnarius, and Q. Sulpitius, all consular senators, who had been his most zealous friends. And behind them march the priests, the sacrificers, the augurs, and the guardians of the sacred things, dressed in their ceremonial habits. These advance slowly, betwixt the files of soldiers under arms. As Tullus enters, Coriolanus rising, salutes him.

CORIOLANUS.

Here, noble Tullus, sit and judge my conduct ;
Nor spare to check me, if I act amiss.

Tul. Marcius, the Volscian fate is in thy hands.

[*Coriolanus is seated again, and Tullus places himself upon a tribunal on his left hand. Meantime the Roman Deputies advance up to Coriolanus, and salute him, which he returns.*]

Cor. What, Romans, from the generals of the
Is your demand ? [Volsci,

Min. O Coriolanus, Rome,

Nurse of thy tender years, thy parent-city,
Her senators, her people, priests and augurs,

Her every order and degree, by us,
Thy ever-zealous, still unshaken friends,
Sue in the most pathetic terms for peace.

And if in this constrain'd, we from our maxim,
Never to ask but give it, must depart ;

It is some consolation, in the state
To which thou hast by thy superior valour
Reduc'd us, that we ask it from a Roman.

Cor. I was a Roman once, and thought the name
Was not dishonour'd by me ; but it pleas'd
Your lords, the mob of Rome, to take it from me ;
Nor will I now receive it back again.

Min. The name thou may'st reject, but can'st not
throw

The duties from thee which that name imports ;
Indissoluble duties bound upon thee

By the strong hand of nature, and confirm'd
By the dread sanction of all-ruling Jove.

Then hear thy country's supplicating voice ;
By all those duties I conjure thee hear us.

Cor. Well—I will hear thee ; speak, declare thy
message.

Min. Give peace, give healing peace, to two brave nations,

Fatigu'd with war and sick of cruel deeds!
 To carry on destruction's easy trade,
 Afflict mankind, and scourge the world with war,
 Is what each wicked, each ambitious man,
 Who lets his furious passions loose, may do :
 But in the flattering torrent of success,
 To check his rage, and drop th' avenging sword,
 When a repenting people ask it of him,
 That is the genuine bounty of a God.
 Then urge no farther this your just resentment :
 Which, injur'd as you are, you needs must feel,
 But never ought to carry into action
 Against your sacred country ; whence you drew
 Your life, your virtues, every moral good,
 That very valour you employ against her.
 Stop, Coriolanus, ere, beyond retreat,
 You plunge yourself in crimes. To the fierce joy
 Of vengeance push'd, to barbarous excess,
 Repentance will succeed, and sickening horror.
 Consider, too, the slippery state of fortune.
 The Gods take pleasure oft, when haughty mortals
 On their own pride erect a mighty fabric,
 By slightest means, to lay their towering schemes
 Low in the dust, and teach them they are nothing.
 Return, thou virtuous Roman ! to the bosom
 Of thy imploring country. Lo ! her arms
 She fondly spreads to take thee back again,
 And by redoubled love efface her harshness.
 Return, and crown thee with the noblest wreath
 Which glory can bestow—the palm of mercy !

Cor. Marcus Minucius, and ye other Romans,
 Respected senators, and holy flamens,
 Attend, and take to your demand this answer :
 Why court ye me, the servant of the Volsci ?

It is to them that you must bend for peace,
Which on these only terms they will accord you.

“ Restore the conquer’d lands, your former wars

“ Have ravish’d from them : from their towns and cities

“ Won by your arms, withdraw your colonies ;

“ And to the full immunities of Rome

“ Frankly admit them, as you have the Latines.”

Then, Romans, you have peace, and not till then !

If these are terms which suit not your ambition,

They suit the state to which the Volscian arms

Have now reduc’d you---We have learn’d from Rome

To use our fortune, and command the vanquish’d.

Tul. [Aside] Death to my hopes ! I’m now his
slave for ever.

Cor. [Addressing himself to the Volsci.] This, my
illustrious patrons and protectors,

Volsci, to you I owed. Permit me now

To do myself and injur’d honour justice.

[Turning again to the Romans.]

As to the liberty you idly vaunt

To give me of returning to your city,

’Tis what I hold unworthy of acceptance.

Can I return into th’ ungrateful bosom

Of a distracted state, where, to the rage

Of a vile senseless populace, the laws

Are by your shameful weakness given a prey ?

Who are the men that hold the sway among you ?

And whom have you expell’d, as even unworthy

To live within the cincture of your walls !

O the wild thought breaks in and troubles reason !—

With what, ye Romans, can the slowest censor,

The most envenom’d malice justly charge me ?

Did I e’er break your laws ? Nay, did I e’er

Do aught that could disturb the sacred order,

The peace and social harmony of life ;

Or taint your ancient sanctity of manners ?

What was my crime? I could not bear to see
Your dignity debas'd, to see the rabble
Tread on the reverend grey authority
Of senatorial wisdom: yes, for you,
In your defence I did enrage this monster;
And yet you basely left me to its fury.
Then talk no more of services and friendship:
A friend, who can, and does not shield, betrays me.
Or if the power was wanting, then your senate
Is sunk into servility and bondage,
Nor should a freeman deign to sit among you.

Min. The wisest are sometimes compell'd to yield
To popular storms: yet I defend not, Marcius,
Our timid conduct; we have felt our error,
And now invite thee back to aid the senate,
With thy heroic spirit, to restrain
The giddy rage of faction, and to hold
The reins of government more firm hereafter.

As to th' appeal which thou hast nobly made,
In vindication of thy spotless fame,
With pleasure we confirm it, and bear witness
To all thy public and thy private virtues:
But let us also beg thee not to stain
The brightness of that glory by a crime,
Which, unrepented, would disgrace them all,
A dire rebellious war against thy country.

Cor. Absurd! What can you mean? To call a
people,

Who with the last indignity have us'd me,
To call my foes my country! No, Minucius,
It is the generous nation of the Volsci,
These brave, these virtuous men, you see around me,
Who, when I wander'd a poor helpless exile,
Took pity of my injuries and woes;
Forgot the former mischiefs of my sword;

Heap'd on me kindness, honours, dignities;
 Fear'd not to trust me with this high command,
 And plac'd me here the guardian of their cause:—
 Be witness, Jove!—It is alone their nation
 I henceforth will acknowledge for my country!
 Let this suffice—you have my answer, Romans.

Com. This answer, Coriolanus, is the dictate
 More of thy pride than of thy magnanimity:
 'Tis thy revenge that gives it, not thy virtue.
 Art thou above the Gods? who joy to shower
 Their doubled goodness on repenting mortals?
 But think not I intend, by this, to urge
 Our profer'd peace, so harshly treated, further.
 That were a weakness ill becoming Romans.
 Yet I must tell thee, it would better suit
 A fierce despotic chief of barbarous slaves,
 Than the calm dignity of one who sits
 In the grave senate of a free republic,
 To talk so high, and as it were to thrust
 Plebeians from the native rights of man.——

Cor. Ha! dost thou come the people's advocate
 To me, Cominius! com'st thou to insult me?

Com. Nay, hear me, Marcius:—These grey hairs
 impower me

To set thee right before this great assembly:
 And there was once a time, thou wouldst have heard
 Thy general with more deference and patience.——
 I tell thee then, whoe'er amidst the sons
 Of reason, valour, liberty, and virtue,
 Displays distinguish'd merit, is a noble
 Of Nature's own creating. Such have risen,
 Sprung from the dust; or where had been our honours?
 And such in radiant bands will rise again,
 In yon immortal city, that, when most
 Depress'd by fate, and near apparent ruin,

Returns, as with an energy divine,
On her astonish'd foes, and shakes them from her—
Your pardon, Volsci—But this, Coriolanus,
Is what I had to say.

Cor. And I have heard it——

*[Rising from his tribunal; and the
priests advancing to address him
he prevents them.]*

For you, ye awful ministers of Heaven,
Let me not hear your holy lips profan'd
By urging what my duty must refuse.
I bow in adoration to the Gods;
I venerate their servants. But there is,
There is a power, their chief, their darling care,
The guardian of mankind, which to betray
Were violating all—And that is justice.

So far my public character demands;
So far my honour—Now, what should forbid
The man, and friend, to be indulg'd a little?

Permit me to embrace thee, good Minucius,
Thee, Lartius; you, Pinnarius and Sulpitius:
But chiefly thee, Cominius, who first rais'd me
To deeds of arms; who from thy consular brow
Took thy own crown, and with it circled mine.
Tho' nought can shake my purpose, yet I wish
That Rome had sent me others on this errand.
I thank you for your friendship. The protection,
Which you have given to those, whom once I call'd
By tender names, I would not now remember.

How shall I—say—return your generous goodness?
O there is nothing you, as friends, can ask,
My grateful heart will not with pleasure grant you.

Com. We thank thee, Coriolanus—But a Roman
Disdains that favour you refuse his country.

Cor. [*To the Volscian Officers.*] See that they be,
with due regard and safety,
Conducted back.

[*To the Roman Senators.*] I will suspend th^t assault,
Till to these terms, of which we will not bate
The smallest part, your senate may have time
To send their latest answer. Then we cut
All further treaty off. Romans, farewell.

The End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

TULLUS alone.

WHAT is the mind of man? A restless scene
Of vanity and weakness; shifting still,
As shift the lights of our uncertain knowledge;
Or as the various gale of passion breathes.

None ever thought himself more deeply founded
On what is right, nor felt a nobler ardour,
Than I, when I invested Caius Marcius
With this ill-judg'd command. Now it appears
Distraction, folly, monstrous folly! meanness!
And down I plunge, betray'd even by my virtue,
From gulf to gulf, from shame to deeper shame.

SCENE II.

TULLUS, GAIUS.

Gal. I listen'd, Tullus, to th' important scene
That lately pass'd before us, with most strict,
Unprejudic'd attention; and have since
Revolv'd it in my mind, both as a man,
Ally'd to all mankind, and as a Volseian.
Indeed our terms are high, and by the manner
In which they were prescrib'd by Coriolanus,
Are what we cannot hope will e'er be granted.
They should be soften'd. Let us yield a little,
Conscious ourselves to a great nation's pride,
The pride of human nature. Could the Romans
Stoop to such peace, commanded by the sword,
They then were slaves, unworthy our alliance.

Tul. Gods! do I hear in thee, one of the chiefs,

Intrusted with the honour of the Volsci,
An advocate for Rome ?

Gal. I glory, Tullus,
To own myself an advocate for peace.
Peace is the happy, natural state of man ;
War his corruption, his disgrace——

Tul. His safeguard !
His pride ! his glory !—What but war, just war,
Gave Greece her heroes ? Those who drew the sword
(As we do now) against the sons of rapine ;
To quell proud tyrants, and to free mankind.

Gal. Yes, Tullus, when to just defence the warrior
Confines his force, he is a worshipp'd name,
Dear to mankind, the first and best of mortals !
Yet still, if this can by soft means be done,
And fair accommodation, that is better.
Why should we purchase with the blood of thousands,
What may be gain'd by mutual just concession ?
Why give up peace, the best of human blessings,
For the vain cruel pride of useless conquest !

Tul. These soothing dreams of philosophic quiet
Are only fit for unfrequented shades.
The sage should quit the busy bustling world,
Ill suited to his gentle meditations,
And in some desert find that peace he loves.

Gal. Mistaken man ! Philosophy consists not
In airy schemes, or idle speculations :
The rule and conduct of all social life
Is her great province. Not in lonely cells
Obscure she lurks, but holds her heavenly light
To senates and to kings, to guide their councils,
And teach them to reform and bless mankind.
All policy but her's is false, and rotten ;
All valour, not conducted by her precepts,
Is a destroying fury sent from hell
To plague unhappy man, and ruin nations.

Tul. To stop the waste of that destroying fury,
Is the great cause and purpose of this war.
Art thou a friend to peace?—subdue the Romans.
Who, who, but they, have turn'd this ancient land,
Where, from Saturnian times, harmonious concord
Still lov'd to dwell, into a scene of blood,
Of endless discord and perpetual rapine?
The sword, the vengeful sword, must drain away
This boiling blood, that thus disturbs the nations!
Talk not of terms. It is a vain attempt
To bind th' ambitious and unjust by treaties:
These they elude a thousand specious ways;
Or if they cannot find a fair pretext,
They blush not in the face of Heaven to break them.

Gal. Why then affronted Heaven will combat for us.
Set justice on our side, and then my voice
Shall be as loud for war as thine; my sword
Shall strike as deep; at least my blood shall flow
As freely, Tullus, in my country's cause.
But as I then would die to serve the Volscians,
So now I dare to serve them by opposing,
Even with my single voice, th' impetuous torrent
That hurries us away beyond the bounds
Of temperate wisdom; and presume to tell thee,
It is thy passion, not thy prudence dictates
This haughty language.

Tul. Yes, it is my passion,
A passion for the glory of my country,
That scorns your narrow views of timid prudence.
Our injur'd honour drew our swords, and never
Shall they be sheath'd while I command the Volscians,
Till Rome submits to Antium.——

Gal. Rome will perish
Ere she submit; and she has still her walls,
The strength of her allies, her native valour,

Which oft has sav'd her in the worst extremes,
And stronger yet than all, despair to aid her.

Tul. All these will nought avail her, if our fears
Come not to her assistance—But, *Gaius*,
Why urge you this to me? Go, talk to *Marcus*.
The war has given him all his pride could hope for,
To see Rome's senate humbled at his feet:
He now may wish to reign in peace at Antium,
And thou, perhaps, art come an envoy from him,
To learn if I shall prove a quiet subject.

Gal. Thro' this unguarded opening of thy soul,
I see what stings thee—Ah! beware of envy!
If that pale fury seize thee thou art lost!
Tullus, 'tis easier far, from the clear breast,
To keep out treacherous vice, than to expel it.
Farewel. Remember I have done my duty.

[*Goes out.*]

Tul. [*alone.*] This man discerns my heart—Well:
what of that?

Am I afraid its movements should be seen?
I, whose clear thoughts have never shunn'd the light,
Must I now seek to hide them? O misfortune!
To have reduc'd myself to such a state,
So much beneath the greatness of my soul,
That, like a coward, I must learn to practise
The wretched arts of vile dissimulation!
By Heaven I will not do't—I will not stoop
To veil my discontent a moment longer.
But see! my rival comes, the happy *Marcus*.
His haughty mein, his very looks affront me.

SCENE III.

CORIOLANUS, TULLUS.

Cor. Tullus, I have receiv'd intelligence,
That a strong body of the Latin troops
Is in full march to raise the siege of Rome.
Another day will bring them to its aid.
But go thou forth, and lead the valiant bands,
By thee commanded, to repel these succours.
Go, and cut off from Rome its last resource.

Tul. I lead my troops from the great scene of
action,
From falling Rome, which ere to-morrow's sun
Shall set, may be our prey! sure you forget
My rank and station—I disdain the service:
Give it to some you may command. For me,
I own no master but the Volscian states.
Rome is my object. I from Antium brought,
The noblest army ever shook her walls.
And shall I now, on that decisive day,
Doom'd by the Gods to lay her pride in ashes,
Shall I be absent from the glorious work?
It is the highest outrage even to think it.—
Just Gods! dost thou presume to give thy orders
To me? to me! thy equal in command?
Nay, thy superior? was it not my hand,
My lavish hand, bestow'd thy power upon thee?
And know, proud Roman, that the man who gave it,
Can at his will resume it.

Cor. I propos'd
This expedition to thee as thy friend,
Not as thy general, Tullus. We are both
Commanders here; and for my share of power,
Whene'er the council of the Volscian states,
Who cloth'd me with it, shall again demand it,
I at their feet will lay it down, persuaded,

The canker'd tongue of Envy's self must own,
That by my service I have well deserv'd it.

Tul. Was it to them or me you hither came
To crave protection? Was not then your fortune,
Your liberty, your life, at my disposal?

I rais'd you from the dust a wretched exile,
An outcast, helpless, friendless, driven to beg
The lowest refuge which despair can seek,
Shelter amidst thy foes. My pitying goodness
Protected, trusted, and believ'd you grateful.

O ill-plac'd confidence! —

Cor. Immortal Gods!

Hear I these words from Tullus!

Tul. What for all this

Is thy return? pride, self-sufficiency;
Councils apart from mine; despotic orders;
The glory of the war, all pilfer'd from me:
And to compleat the whole, a Latin army
Now conjur'd up to draw me from the siege;
Till by cajoling our tame chiefs, and dazzling
The senseless eyes of the low mob of soldiers,
Thou shalt be solely seated in the power
Which, thank my folly! now is shar'd betwixt us.

Cor. O indignation? — Down, thou swelling heart—
I will be calm—I will—Thou dost accuse me
Of the worst vice that can debase mankind,
Of black ingratitude. On what foundations?
What have I done to merit such a charge?
Is it my fault, if in the Volscian army
My name is as rever'd and great as thine?
Can I forbid authority and fame,
To follow merit and success? — You knew
The man whom you employed, and should have
known

He would not be a cypher in employment.

Tul. Think'st thou my heart can better brook than
thine

To be that cypher! that dishonour'd tool!
Subservient to th' ambition of another?
Gods! I had rather live a drudging peasant,
Unknown to glory, in some Alpine village;
Than at the head of these victorious legions,
Bear the high name of chief, without the power.
No, Marcius, no. I will command indeed:
And thou shalt learn, with all the Volscian army,
To treat their general with respect.

Cor. Respect!

O Tullus! Tullus! by the powers divine!
I bore thee once respect, as high as man
Can shew to man. From thee, my foe, my rival,
I nor disdain'd nor fear'd to ask protection.
You gave me all I ask'd, you gave me more,
With noble warmth of heart! which to esteem,
Added the ties of gratitude and friendship.
Whatever since in council or in arms,
Has been by me achiev'd, was done for thee.
My glory all was thine. The palms I gain'd
Only compos'd a garland for his brow,
Who rais'd this banish'd man to tread on Rome.

Tul. To tread on him who rais'd him—That, I
know,

Is thy ambitious purpose; but be certain,
However Rome may bend beneath thy fortune,
Thou shalt not find an easy conquest here.

Cor. May Jove with lightning strike me to the
centre,

If from the day I saw thy face at Antium,
My heart has ever form'd one secret thought
To hurt thy honour, or depress thy greatness:
I was thy friend, thy soldier, and thy servant.
But now I will as openly avow,

Thy jealousy has, with envenom'd breath,
Made such a sudden ravage in our friendship,
I know not what to think——

Tul. Think me thy foe.

There is no lasting friendship with the proud.

Cor. Nor with the jealous—But of this enough.
Come, let us turn our fire a nobler way :

We have a worthier quarrel to pursue.——

It were unjust, dishonourable, base,
Our pride should hurt the Volscian cause.

Tul. No, Marcius,

I mean to guard it better for the future :

The Volscian cause is safest with a Volscian.

I therefore claim, insist upon my right ;

That you should yield me my command in turn.

The first attack was yours : 'tis scanty justice,

The second should be mine.

Cor. Tullus, 'tis yours.

O it imports not which of us command !

Give me the lowest rank among your troops ;

All Italy will know the voice of fame

Will tell all future times, that I was present ;

That Coriolanus in the Volscian army

Assisted, when imperial Rome was sack'd ;

That city which, while he maintain'd her cause,

Invincible herself, made Antium tremble.

Tul. What arrogant presumption !

S C E N E IV.

To them VOLUSIUS, entering hastily.

Tul. Ha ! Volusius,

Thy looks declare some message of importance.

Vol. Tullus, they do—I was to find thee, Marcius,
To thee a second deputation comes,
Thy mother, and thy wife, with a long train

Of all the noblest ladies Rome can boast,
In mourning habits clad, approach our camp,
Preceded by a herald, to demand
Another audience of thee.

Cor. How, Volusius!

Said you the Roman ladies! Low, indeed,
Must be the state of Rome, when thus her matrons
She sends amidst the tumults of a camp,
To beg protection for the men, who ly
Trembling behind their ramparts—Come! once
more!

And see me put an end to prayers and treaty!

S C E N E V.

TULLUS, VOLUSIUS.

Vol. Tullus, 'tis well. This answers to my wishes.

Tul. How! what is well? that humbled Rome once
more

Shall deck him with the trophies of our arms?

Vol. And hop'st thou nothing from this blest event?
They who have often blasted mighty heroes,
Who oft have stolen into the firmest hearts,
And melted them to folly; they, my friend,
Will do what wisdom never could effect.

Tul. Think'st thou the prayers and tears of wailing
women

Can shake the man, who with such cold disdain
Stood firm against those venerable consuls,
And spurn'd the genius of his kneeling country?

Vol. It was his pride alone that made him ours.
That passion kept him firm; the flattering charm
Of humbling those, who in their persons bore
The whole collected majesty of Rome.

These women are no proper objects for it:
He cannot triumph o'er his wife and mother.

On this my hopes are founded, that these women
May by their gentler influence subdue him.

Tul. Whate'er th' event, he shall no longer here,
As wave his passions, dictate peace or war.
Whether his stubborn soul maintains its firmness,
Or yields to female prayers, the Volscian honour
Will be alike betray'd. If Rome prevails,
He stops our conquering arms from her destruction;
If he rejects her suit, he reigns our tyrant.
But by th' immortal Gods! his short-liv'd empire
Shall never see yon radiant sun descend.

Vol. Bless'd be those Gods that have at last inspir'd
thee

With resolution equal to thy cause,
The cause of liberty! —

Tul. Be sure, Volusus,
If that should happen which thy hopes portend;
Should he, by Nature tamed, disarm'd by love,
Respite the Roman doom—he seals his own:
By Heaven, he dies!

Vol. Let me embrace thee, Tullus!
Now breaking from the cloud, which like the sun,
Thy own too bounteous beams had drawn around
thee.

Tul. You was deceiv'd, my friend. When I with
tameness,
With tameness which astonish'd thy brave spirit,
Seem'd to submit to that unequal sway
He arrogated o'er me; know, my heart
Ne'er swell'd so high as in that cruel moment.
My indignation, like th' imprison'd fire
Pent in the troubled breast of glowing Ætna,
Burnt deep and silent: but, collected now,
It shall beneath its fury bury Marcius!
'Tis fix'd.—Our tyrant dies.

Vol. Tullus, my sword

Here claims to be employ'd.—Nor mine alone—
There are some worthy Volsci still remaining,
Who think with us, and pine beneath the laurels
A Roman chief bestows.

Tul. Go, find them strait,
And bring them to the space before his tent;
'Tis there he will receive this deputation.
Then if he sinks beneath these womens prayers—
Or if he does not—But, Volusius, wait,
I give thee strictest charge to wait my signal.
Perhaps I may find means to free the Volsci
Without his blood. If not—we will be free.

The End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

Trumpets sounding.

The scene discovers the camp, a croud of Volscian Officers, with files of soldiers, drawn up as before. Enter CORIOLANUS, TULLUS, GALESUS, VOLUSIUS. The Roman Ladies advance slowly from the depth of the stage, with VETURIA, the mother of CORIOLANUS, and VOLUMNIA, his wife, at their head, all clad in habits of mourning. CORIOLANUS, stands at the head of the Volsci, surrounded by his liſtors; but when he perceives his mother and wife, after some struggle, he advances, and goes hastily to embrace them.

CORIOLANUS advancing.

LOWER your fasces, liſtors——
Oh Veturia!

Thou best of parents!

Vet. Coriolanus, stop.

Whom am I to embrace? A son or foe?

Say, in what light am I regarded here?

Thy mother or thy captive?

Cor. Justly, Madam,

You check my fondness, that by nature hurry'd,

Forgot I was the general of the Volsci,

And you a deputy from hostile Rome.

[He goes back to his former station.]

I hear you with respect. Speak your commission.

Vet. Think not I come a deputy from Rome.

Rome, once rejected, scorns a second suit.

You have already heard whate'er the tongue

Of eloquence can plead, whate'er the wisdom

Of sacred age, the dignity of senates,

And virtue can enforce. Behold me here,

I

Sent by the shades of your immortal fathers,
 Sent by the genius of the Marcian line,
 Commission'd by my own maternal heart,
 To try the soft, yet stronger powers of nature.
 Thus authoriz'd, I ask, nay, claim a peace,
 On equal, fair, and honourable terms,
 To thee, to Rome and to the Volscian people.
 Grant it, my son ! Thy mother begs it of thee,
 Thy wife, the best, the kindest of her sex,
 And these illustrious matrons, who have sooth'd
 The gloomy hours thou hast been absent from us,
 We, by whate'er is great and good in nature,
 By every duty, by the Gods, conjure thee !
 To grant us peace, and turn on other foes
 Thy arms where thou may'st purchase virtuous
 glory.

Cor. I should, Veturia, break those holy bonds
 That hold the wide republic of mankind,
 Society, together ; I should grow
 A wretch, unworthy to be call'd thy son ;
 I should, with my Volumnia's fair esteem,
 Forfeit her love ; these matrons would despise me---
 Could I betray the Volscian cause, thus trusted,
 Thus recommended to me--No, my mother,
 You cannot, sure you cannot ask it of me !

Vet. And does my son so little know me ? me !
 Who took such care to form his tender years,
 Left to my conduct by his dying father ?
 Have I so ill deserv'd that trust ? alas !
 Am I so low in thy esteem, that thou
 Should'st e'er imagine I could urge a part
 Which in the least might stain the Marcian honour ?
 No, let me perish rather ! perish all !
 Life has no charms compar'd with spotless glory !
 I only ask, thou wouldst forbid thy troops
 To waste our lands, and to assault yon city,

Till time be given for mild and righteous measures,
Grant us but one year's truce : meanwhile thou
may'st,

With honour and advantage to both nations,
Between us mediate a perpetual peace.

Cor. Alas ! my mother ! that were granting all.

Vet. Canst thou refuse me such a just petition,
The first request thy mother ever made thee ?
Canst thou to her intreaties, prayers and tears,
Prefer a savage obstinate revenge ?
Have love and nature lost all power within thee ?

Cor. No---in my heart they reign as strong as ever.
Come, I conjure thee, quit ungrateful Rome ;
Come, and complete my happiness at Antium,
You, and my dear Volumnia---There, Veturia,
There shall you see with what respect the Volsci
Will treat the wife and mother of your general.

Vet. Treat me thyself with more respect, my son ;
Nor dare to shock my ears with such proposals.
Shall I desert my country, I who come
To plead her cause ? Ah no !--- A grave in Rome
Would better please me, than a throne at Antium.
How hast thou thus forsaken all my precepts ?
How hast thou thus forgot thy love to Rome ?
O Coriolanus, when with hostile arms,
With fire and sword, you enter'd on our borders,
Did not the fostering air, that breathes around us,
Allay thy guilty fury, and instil
A certain native sweetness thro' thy soul ?
Did not your heart thus murmur to itself ?
“ These walls contain whatever can command
“ Respect from virtue, or is dear to nature,
“ The monuments of piety and valour.
“ The sculptur'd forms, the trophies of my fathers,
“ My household Gods, my mother, wife and children !
Cor. Ah ! you seduce me with too tender views !

These walls contain the most corrupt of men,
A base seditious herd; who trample order,
Distinction, justice, laws, beneath their feet,
Insolent foes to worth, the foes of virtue!

Vet. Thou hast not thence a right to lift thy hand
Against the whole community which forms
Thy ever-sacred country—that consists
Not of coëval citizens alone:

It knows no bounds; it has a retrospect
To ages past; it looks on those to come;
And grasps of all the general worth and virtue.
Suppose, my son, that I to thee had been
A harsh obdurate parent, even unjust:
How would the monstrous thought with horror strike
thee,

Of plunging, from revenge, thy raging steel
Into her breast, who nurs'd thy infant years!—

Cor. Rome is no more! that Rome which nurs'd my
youth;

That Rome conducted by Patrician virtue,
She is no more! My sword shall now chastise
These sons of pride and dirt! her upstart tyrants!
Who have debas'd the noblest state on earth
Into a sordid democratic faction.

Why will my mother join her cause to theirs?

Vet. Forbid it, Jove! that I should e'er distinguish
My interest from the general cause of Rome;
Or live to see a foreign hostile arm
Reform th' abuses of our land of freedom. [*Pausing.*
But 'tis in vain, I find, to reason more.

Is there no way to reach thy filial heart,
Once fam'd as much for piety as courage?
Oft hast thou justly triumph'd, Coriolanus;
Now yield one triumph to thy widow'd mother;
And send me back amidst the loud acclaims,
The grateful transports of deliver'd Rome,

The happiest far, the most renown'd of women !

Cor. Why, why, Veturia, wilt thou plead in vain ?

Tul. [*aside to Volufius.*] See, see, Volufius, how the strong emotions

Of powerful nature shake his inmost soul !

See how they tear him !—If he long refists them,

He is a God, or something worfe than man.

Vet. O Marcius, Marcius ! canft thou treat me thus ?

Canft thou complain of Rome's ingratitude,

Yet be to me fo cruelly ungrateful ?

To me ! who anxious rear'd thy youth to glory ?

Whofe only joy, thefe many years, has been

To boast that Coriolanus was my fon ?

And doft thou then renounce me for thy mother ?

Spurn me before thefe chiefs, before thofe foldiers,

That weep thy stubborn cruelty ? Art thou

The hardeft man to me in this afsembly !

Look at me ! fpeak !

[*Paufing, during which he appears in great agitation.*]

Still doft thou turn away ?

Inexorable ? filent ? — Then, behold me,

Behold thy mother, at whofe feet thou oft

Haft kneel'd with fondnefs, kneeling now at thine,

Wetting thy ftern tribunal with her tears.

Cor. [*raifes her.*] Veturia, rife. I cannot fee thee thus.

It is a fight uncomely, to behold

My mother at my feet, and that to urge

A fuit relentlefs honour muft refufe.

Vol. [*advancing.*] Since, Coriolanus, thou doft ftill retain,

In fpite of all thy mother now has pleaded,

Thy dreadful purpofe, ah ! how much in vain

Were it for me to join my fupplications !

The voice of thy Volumnia, once fo pleafing ;

How shall it hope to touch the husband's heart,
 When proof against the tears of such a parent?
 I dare not urge what to thy mother thou
 So firmly hast deny'd——But I must weep——
 Must weep, if not thy harsh severity,
 At least thy situation. O permit me

[Taking his hand.]

To shed my gushing tears upon thy hand!
 To press it with the cordial lips of love!
 And take my last farewell!

Cor. Yet, yet, my soul,
 Be firm, and persevere——

Vol. Ah, Coriolanus!

Is then this hand, this hand to me devoted,
 The pledge of nuptial love, that has so long
 Protected, bless'd, and shelter'd us with kindness,
 Now lifted up against us? Yet I love it,
 And, with submissive veneration, bow
 Beneath th' affliction which it heaps upon us.
 But O! what nobler transports would it give thee!
 What joy beyond expression! couldst thou once
 Surmount the furious storm of fierce revenge,
 And yield thee to the charms of love and mercy.
 Oh make the glorious trial!

Cor. Mother! wife!

Are all the powers of nature leagu'd against me!
 I cannot!—will not!—Leave me, my Volumnia!

Vol. Well, I obey—How bitter thus to part!
 Upon such terms to part! perhaps for ever!
 But tell me, ere I hence unroot my feet,
 When to my lonely home I shall return,
 What from their father, to our little slaves,
 Unconscious of the shame to which you doom them,
 What shall I say? *[Pausing: he highly agitated.]*
 Nay, tell me, Coriolanus!

Cor. Tell thee! what shall I tell thee? See these tears!

The tears will tell thee what exceeds the power
Of words to speak, whate'er the son, the husband,
And father, in one complicated pang,
Can feel—But leave me; even in pity leave me!
Cease, cease, to torture me, my dear Volumnia!
You only tear my heart; but cannot shake it:
For by th' immortal Gods, the dread avengers
Of broken faith!—

Vol. [*kneeling.*] Oh swear not, Coriolanus!
Oh vow not our destruction!

Ves. Daughter, rise.

Let us no more before the Volscian people
Expose ourselves a spectacle of shame.
It is in vain we try to melt a breast,
That to the best affections nature gives us,
Prefers the worst—Hear me, proud man! I have
A heart as stout as thine. I came not hither,
To be sent back rejected, baffled, shamed,
Hateful to Rome, because I am thy mother:
A Roman matron knows, in such extremes,
What part to take—And thus I came provided.

[*Drawing from under her robe a dagger.*]

Go! barbarous son! go! double parricide!
Rush 'o'er my corse to thy belov'd revenge!
Tread on the bleeding breast of her whom
Thou ow'st thy life—Lo! thy first victim!

Cor. Ha!

[*Seizing her hand.*]

What dost thou mean?

Ves. To die, while Rome is free.

To seize the moment ere thou art her tyrant.

Cor. O use thy power more justly! Set not thus
My treacherous heart in arms against my reason.
Here! here! thy dagger will be well employ'd;
Strike here! and reconcile my fighting duties.

Ves. Off!—Set me free!—Think'st thou that grasp,
which binds

My feeble hand, can fetter too my will?

No, my proud son! thou canst not make me live,
If Rome must fall!—No power on earth can do it.

Cor. Pity me, generous Volsci!—You are men—
Must it then be?—Confusion!—Do I yield?
What is it? Is it weakness? Is it virtue?—
Well!—

Ves. What? Speak!

Cor. O, no!—my stifled words refuse
A passage to the throes that wring my heart.

Ves. Nay, if thou yieldest, yield like Coriolanus;
And what thou dost, do nobly!

Cor. [*quitting her hand.*] There!—'Tis done!—
Thine is the triumph, nature!

[*To Veturia in a low tone of voice.*] Ah, Veturia!
Rome by thy aid is sav'd—but thy son lost.

Ves. He never can be lost, who saves his country.

Cor. [*Turning to the Roman Ladies.*] Ye matrons,
guardians of the Roman safety,

You to the senate may report this answer.

We grant the truce you ask. But on these terms:

That Rome, meantime, shall to a peace agree,

Fair, equal, just, and such as may secure

The safety, rights, and honour of the Volsci.

[*To the troops.*]

Volsci, we raise the siege. Go, and prepare,

By the first dawn, for your return to Antium.

[*As the troops retire, and Coriolanus turns
to the Roman Ladies.*]

Tul. [*To Volusius aside,*] 'Tis as we wish'd, Volu-
sius—To your station.

But mark me well—Till thou shalt hear my call,

I charge thee not to stir. One offer more

My honour bids me make to this proud man,

Before we strike the blow---If he rejects it,
His blood be on his head.

Vol. Well! I obey you.

[*He goes out.*]

Cor. Be it thy care, *Gaius*, that a safeguard
Attend these noble matrons back to Rome.

S C E N E II.

CORIOLANUS, TULLUS.

Cor. I plainly, *Tullus*, by your looks discern
You disapprove my conduct.

Tul. *Gaius Marcius*,

I mean not to assail thee with the clamour
Of loud reproaches, and the war of words;
But, pride apart, and all that can pervert
The light of steady reason, here to make
A candid fair proposal.

Cor. Speak, I hear thee.

Tul. I need not tell thee, that I have perform'd
My utmost promise. Thou hast been protect'd;
Hast had thy amplest, most ambitious wish;
Thy wounded pride is heal'd, thy dear revenge
Completely fated; and to crown thy fortune,
At the same time thy peace with Rome restor'd.
Thou art no more a *Volscian*, but a *Roman*.
Return, return: thy duty calls upon thee
Still to protect the city thou hast saved:
It still may be in danger from our arms.

Cor. Insolent man! is this thy fair proposal?

Tul. Be patient---Hear me speak---I have already
From Rome protect'd thee; now from the *Volsci*,
From their just vengeance, I will still protect thee.
Retire. I will take care thou may'st with safety.

Cor. With safety!---Heavens!---And think'st thou,
Coriolanus

Will stoop to thee for safety? No! my safeguard

Is in myself, a bosom void of blame,
 And the great Gods, protectors of the just—
 O 'tis an act of cowardice and baseness,
 To seize the very time my hands were fetter'd
 By the strong chain of former obligations,
 The safe sure moment to insult me!—Gods!
 Were I now free, as on that day I was,
 When at Corioli I tam'd thy pride,
 This had not been.

Tul. Thou speak'st the truth: it had not.
 O for that time again! Propitious Gods,
 If you will bless me, grant it!--Know, for that,
 For that dear purpose, I have now propos'd
 Thou should'st return. I pray thee, Marcius, do it!
 And we shall meet again on nobler terms.

Cor. When to the Volsci I have clear'd my faith,
 Doubt not I shall find means to meet thee nobly.
 We then our generous quarrel may decide
 In the bright front of some embattled field,
 And not in private brawls, like fierce barbarians.

Tul. Thou canst not hope acquittal from the Volsci.

Cor. I do:—Nay, more, expect their approbation,
 Their thanks! I will obtain them such a peace
 As thou durst never ask; a perfect union
 Of their whole nation with Imperial Rome
 In all her privileges, all her rights.
 By the just Gods, I will! What wouldst thou more?

Tul. What would I more? proud Roman! This I
 would;

Fire the curs'd forest where these Roman wolves
 Haunt and infest their nobler neighbours round them;
 Extirpate from the bosom of this land
 A false perfidious people, who beneath
 The masque of freedom, are a combination
 Against the liberty of human kind,
 The genuine seed of outlaws and of robbers.

Cor. The seed of Gods!—'Tis not for thee, vain
boaster!

'Tis not for such as thou, so often spar'd
By her victorious sword, to talk of Rome,
But with respect and awful veneration.
Whate'er her blots, whate'er her giddy factions,
There is more virtue in one single year
Of Roman story, than your Volscian annals
Can boast through all your creeping dark duration!

Tul. I thank thy rage. This full displays the
traitor.

Cor. Ha! traitor!

Tul. First to thy own country, traitor!
And traitor now to mine!

Cor. Ye heavenly powers!
I shall break loose—my rage—but let us part—
Lest my rash hand should do a hasty deed
My cooler thought forbids.

Tul. Begone—Return—

To head the Roman troops. I grant thee quittance
Full and compleat of all those obligations
Thou hast so oft insultingly complain'd
Fetter'd thy hands. They now are free. I court
The worst thy sword can do; whilst thou from me
Hast nothing to expect but sure destruction.
Quit then this hostile camp. Once more I tell thee,
Thou art not here one single hour in safety.

Cor. Think'st thou to fright me hence?

Tul. Thou wilt not then?

Thou wilt not take the safety which I offer?

Cor. Till I have clear'd my honour in your council,
And prov'd before them all, to thy confusion,
The falsehood of thy charge; as soon in battle
I would before thee fly, and howl for mercy,
As quit the station they have here assign'd me.

Tul. Volufius! ho!

S C E N E III.

To them VOLUSIUS, and Conspirators, with their
swords drawn.

Tul. Seize and secure the traitor !

Cor. [*Laying his hand upon his sword.*] Who dares
approach me dies !

Vol. Die thou !

[*As Coriolanus draws his sword,
Volusius and the Conspirators
rush upon and stab him. Tullus
standing by, without having
drawn his sword.*]

Cor. [*Endeavouring to free himself.*] Off !—Villains !
[*Falling.*] O murdering slaves ! Assassinating cowards !
[*Dies.*]

S C E N E IV.

[*Upon the noise of the tumult, enter hastily to them
GALESUS, the other Deputies of the Volscian
States, Officers, friends of Coriolanus, and TITUS
with a large band of soldiers.*]

Gal. [*as he enters.*] Are we a nation rul'd by laws,
or fury ?

How ! whence this tumult ?— [Pausing.
Gods ! what do I see ?

The noble Marcius slain !

Tul. You see a traitor
Punish'd as he deserv'd, the Roman yoke ;
That thrall'd us broken, and the Volsci free !

Gal. Hear me, great Jove ! Hear, all you injur'd
powers

Of friendship, hospitality and faith !

By that heroic blood, which from the ground
Reeking to you for vengeance cries, I swear !

This impious breach of your eternal laws,
This daring outrage on the Volscian honour,
Shall find in me a rigorous avenger !

On the same earth, polluted by their crime,
I will not live with these unpunish'd ruffians !

Tul. This deed is mine : I claim it all ! — These
men,

These valiant men, were but my instruments,
To punish him who to our face betray'd us.
We shall not fear to answer to the Volsci,
In a full council of the States at Antium,
The glorious charge of having stabb'd their traitor !

Gal. Titus, till then secure them.

[Tullus and Conspirators are led off.]

*[Galeus, standing over the body of Coriolanus, after
a short pause, proceeds.]*

Volscian fathers,

And ye, brave soldiers, see an awful scene,
Demanding serious solemn meditation.

This man was once the glory of his age,
Disinterested, just, with every virtue
Of civil life adorn'd, in arms unequall'd.
His only blot was this ; that, much provok'd,
He rais'd his vengeful arm against his country.

And, lo ! the righteous Gods have now chastis'd
him,

Even by the hands of those for whom he fought.

Whatever private views and passions plead,
No cause can justify so black a deed :
These, when the angry tempest clouds the soul,
May darken reason, and her course controul ;

But when the prospect clears, her startled eye
Must from the treacherous gulph with horror fly,
On whose wild wave, by stormy passions tost,
So many hapless wretches have been lost.
Then be this truth the star by which we steer,
"Above ourselves our Country should be dear."

The End of the Fifth Act.

EPILOGUE.

Spoken by Mrs WOFFINGTON.

*WELL! Gentlemen! and are you still so vain—
To treat our sex with arrogant disdain;
And think, to you alone by partial Heaven
Superior sense and sovereign power are given,
When in the story told to-night, you find,
With what a boundless sway we rule the mind.
And by a few soft words of ours, with ease,
Can turn the proudest hearts just where we please?
If an old mother had such powerful charms,
To stop a stubborn Roman's conquering arms,——
Soldiers and statesmen of those days, with you,
What think you would a fair young mistress do?
If with my grave discourse and wrinkled face,
I thus could bring a hero to disgrace,
How absolutely may I hope to reign
Now I am turn'd to my own shape again!
However, I will use my empire well;
And, if I have a certain magic spell
Or in my tongue, or wit, or shape, or eyes,
Which can subdue the strong, and fool the wise,
Be not alarm'd: I will not interfere
In state-affairs, nor undertake to steer
The helm of government,—as we are told
These famous politicians did of old:
Such dangerous heights I never wish'd to climb——
Thank Heav'n I better can employ my time——*

EPILOGUE.

Ask you to what my power I shall apply?
To make my subjects blest, is my reply.
My purposes are gracious all, and kind.
Some may be told—and some may be divin'd:
One which at present I have most at heart,
To you without reserve I will impart:
It is my sovereign will,—Hear and obey,—
That you with candour treat this Orphan Play.

END OF VOLUME FOURTH.



